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THE HARNESS OF DEATH

By W. STANLEY SYKES

Dr. Sykes' first novel, THE MAN WHO WAS DEAD, was hailed by critics and public alike as one of last year's outstanding detective story successes. In THE HARNESS OF DEATH, Inspector Drury, who, in his earlier investigation, traced the "poison" that killed Mr. Levinsky, is faced with another crime even more ingenious because it is not dependent on such abstruse scientific knowledge. Its stark simplicity and cleanness of execution leave not a shred of evidence. And later, an extraordinary alibi comes to light, which, though suspected, is too clever to be broken down.

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE MAN WHO WAS DEAD

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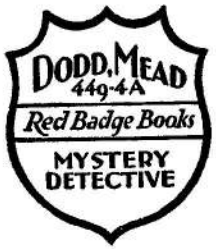

THE HARNESS OF DEATH

By
W. STANLEY SYKES

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W. STANLEY SYKES.

Morley.

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CHAPTER I

EXIT MR. REINOLD

"OPEN that door and give me my knife," demanded Marston angrily. "I'm through with you."

"How refreshingly American," drawled Reinold. "Do I understand that you are—er—handing in your resignation?"

"You do."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then the world will be a cleaner place, because I shall break your neck. I shall probably break it in any case. So."

Marston took a step forward, and one of his powerful hands seized the other man's head. Further and further he forced it back over the rail of the chair, expertly stopping at the final resistance which precedes the irrevocable snap. For a moment or two he held it and watched the upturned face grow dusky and mottled as the veins in the thin neck swelled out into knotted blue cords.

Even then Reinold's iron will did not fail him, and his logical mind remained clear. He made no

attempt to remove the restraining arm across his chest, realizing the utter futility of struggling against an enemy twice his weight.

The grip upon his head was suddenly relaxed and he sat forward in his chair and eased his crumpled collar. There was a short pause. Marston, dumbfounded at the complete absence of resistance, waited to see the effect of his tactics.

"Your methods are as crude as ever," Reinold said at last. His voice showed nothing of the strain he had suffered.

"Possibly. But they are sometimes very effective. And if they do not succeed the first time they can always be repeated. Now will you open that box?"

"All right." Reinold lowered his eyes in the bitterness of defeat and stretched out a listless hand to a drawer in his desk. Marston caught his wrist and held it in a crushing grip.

"What's the matter now? I must get the keys. I can't open the safe with my teeth."

"I'll get them," replied Marston. "I have a suspicious mind."

He pulled open the drawer and took out a bunch of keys, which he laid on the desk. He then put in his hand again and took out a large Webley revolver, which he slipped into his pocket.

"Am I right, sir? Thank you," he added, with a smile.

Reinold gave a despairing shrug of the shoulders, picked up the keys and limped across the office floor with the aid of his rubber-shod stick, without which he could not walk a step. He unlocked the safe, opened the enormous door with an effort which taxed his feeble strength to the utmost and took down a black tin deed-box from the top shelf. This he carried to the desk, while Marston sat down with a triumphant smile on his face and watched him go back to the safe to fetch the keys.

He returned with a black frown on his brow and his lips compressed into a thin, straight line. Marston could realize better than most people the depth of his humiliation. Reinold was unaccustomed to taking orders.

He unlocked the box and threw back the lid. Handful after handful of papers he took out and piled in a heap. Finally a long brown package appeared and was put down on the mahogany surface of the desk with a muffled ring. Through a tear in the paper showed the flash of bright steel.

"There's your knife," he said sullenly.

Marston's eyes brightened. At last the bond of blackmail was broken. It was the very first time that the incriminating knife had been accessible to him for fifteen years. For once the almost infallible Reinold had been caught napping.

"Now I want the other package."

Reinold nodded and put his hand into the box again. Slowly he withdrew it, and Marston leaned his huge bulk back in his creaking chair and stared with hypnotized eyes at the rock-steady muzzle of a little automatic pistol which was levelled at his chest.

The diminutive figure seated at the desk gave a mirthless chuckle. Reinold was never known to laugh outright.

"My dear Mr. Marston," he began in precise tones, "you talk too much. Rest your overworked larynx for a moment and listen to me. You seem surprised at the production of this—er—*argumentum ad hominem*. Naturally so, because you have always regarded me solely as an organizer, as a mere brain with a negligible body, as a spider designing webs for others to construct, and this is the first time you—or anyone else for that matter—have seen me as a man of action. That part of the business I usually leave to the competent attention of my worthy but somewhat thick-headed partner. It also happens to be the first time that anyone has ever dared to threaten me. Cause and effect, Marston, cause and effect. The man of bread and milk may at any moment become the man of blood and iron, if he is pressed far enough."

There was no reply from the trapped listener.

"While admiring me as chief of a staff and as

a thinking machine you have always despised me in your heart—oh, yes, you have—because I am physically feeble while you are strong, and because I am a cripple while you are an athlete. But brains always lead, Marston, in this artificial civilization of ours. That is why I am the leader and you are merely the lieutenant. Your intellect shows its mediocrity by underestimating your opponent. You foresaw the revolver in the drawer, but not the unexpected one in the deed-box. Dangerous man, old Reinold, you say to yourself, but only because he knows awkward details about me. If he is dead he will no longer be dangerous, and he will be easy to kill. Break his neck with one hand. That was your line of thought to-night, I think. Correct me if I am wrong."

The man in the basket chair did not speak, but slowly uncrossed his legs.

"No, please don't move. I assure you that it is loaded. And, Marston, I know how to use it." The last few words were spoken in a less benevolent tone, and the short-sighted eyes behind the horn-rimmed glasses were as unwavering as the blue barrel of the pistol itself. Reptilian eyes they were, cold and expressionless, the eyes of one utterly devoid of pity or sentiment. In spite of what had happened there was no sign of anger or exultation in them, but merely an inhuman efficiency which

made Marston feel strangely helpless. A man he could handle, but a machine, a passionless iceberg—his legs ceased to move.

"I do not claim," continued the holder of the weapon, "that I can shoot the ace of spades at twenty yards, as the hero of fiction invariably does, but I am quite certain I could hit a target of your somewhat unnecessary bulk at a range of approximately four feet. And you need not think, as you probably are doing, that I am afraid of the noise being heard."

Marston gave a slight start. This was exactly what he was thinking, and deriving no small comfort from it.

"Of course," he began ironically, "if you don't mind the caretaker hearing you, carry on with the target practice."

"I happen to know that the caretaker is out," was the reply. "But there is nothing like a practical demonstration to carry conviction . . ."

The muzzle of the automatic swung aside for a moment and a bright flash of flame spurted from it. The accompanying vicious crack sounded deafening in the confined space and made Marston's ears ring. Temporarily blinded, his face went white, and beads of sweat appeared on his forehead. Very few can bear with equanimity the whistle of a bullet past the ear, especially when it is fired at pointblank

range by a man who has six shots more at his disposal and no scruples about using them. A slight haze of acrid smoke drifted across the room.

"That's better," went on the mocking voice. "I suppose you thought I didn't notice you bracing yourself up for a jump. Don't you know me well enough by this time to realize that my safety depends on noticing things that other people miss? I fear we did not take your education in hand early enough, my dear Marston. I did not actually hit the ash-tray I was aiming at, I see, but the bullet hole is only about an inch away from it, which is good enough shooting for practical purposes. At any rate it will prove that I have no fear of the shot being heard. This room is very conveniently fitted with double doors, you may remember."

This was quite true. Marston had himself suggested the double baize-covered doors many years before in order to deaden the sound of traffic.

"Has it ever struck you that the metallurgical laboratory in the next room has two furnaces which could dispose of a dead body fairly easily?"

The question was put in a casual and conversational, indeed almost amiable, tone of voice, but Marston's pallor grew more intense as he realized its significance. The comparative sound-proofness of the office had appealed to him strongly when he entered the room with murder in his heart, but now

that the rôles were reversed and the position of corpse-elect appeared to be allotted to himself the advantage was not nearly so apparent.

The undersized little creature in the revolving chair stretched out his left hand and fumbled about until he found the switch he was seeking. Never for a moment did his eyes leave his unnerved antagonist. The switch clicked and an electric fan began to hum.

"I hate the smell of burnt cordite," remarked Reinold.

"You don't hate it half as much as I do," replied Marston fervently.

"Good," smiled the other. "Your sense of humour is returning. I congratulate you. But we are digressing. You came here to-night to frighten me with your threats. Just because you have been a useful assistant you presume on your position and attempt to dictate your own terms. If you have any excuses you had better make them now, and then I will decide what to do with you."

He paused, and Marston, moistening his dry lips and swallowing hastily, began to talk as only a man can who knows that his life depends upon it.

"Look here, Reinold," he urged, "I have served you for fifteen years. I have carried out every order you have given me. I have done all my work without shirking and worked overtime for months at a stretch ——"

"And feathered your own nest in the meantime," interrupted the other.

"I know I have. You always pay well. I'll say that for you. But I earned every penny of it. And what would you have done without me? I know you arranged everything, but plans, even plans like yours, are not much good without somebody to carry them out."

"As an executive you are unequalled," admitted the cripple. "But it is a fatal mistake to think that you are indispensable. I could easily train some one else to take your place. There are several other people who are bound to us with ties of—shall we say?—affection and esteem just as strong as yours. You are not the only one who has carelessly left evidence lying about."

"Well, then," pleaded the big man, "let me go. I have earned my freedom."

"Freedom?" jeered Reinold. "You earn at least a thousand a year and have complete immunity from the attentions of the police, thanks to my brain. Isn't that freedom? What freedom would you have had if, fifteen years ago, I had not removed your knife from Morgan's body and hidden it? I admit that you would not have got a very long sentence. Only about three weeks, but at the end

of it they would have taken you out to a little shed with a trap-door in the floor and a rope hanging from the roof, and they would have put the rope round your neck and ——"

"For God's sake shut up," cried Marston.

"I saved you from that and gave you a highly paid job instead. Isn't that freedom?"

"No. Slavery," was the sober reply.

"It has taken you a long time to realize it. You have always seemed satisfied up to the present. Turning pious in your old age?"

"If you like to put it that way," agreed Marston. His strength was rapidly returning and his heart had ceased its frenzied thumping, but his attitude of limp terror remained craftily unchanged. If only those eyes would stop boring into him, if only the cripple would relax his attention for one second—but the hand that held the pistol was resting comfortably on the desk and showed no sign of fatigue.

"Why?" persisted the inexorable voice. "Is it a case of *cherchez la femme* or merely cold feet?"

Marston, who was a man of irascible temper, flushed crimson at the insult. Never before in his stormy and lawless life had anyone accused him of cowardice with impunity.

"Your first guess is the right one," he replied, choking down his anger and forcing himself to speak calmly. Wildly he groped for something to say—at

all costs he must keep going a conversation of sufficient interest to make Reinold relax his attention.

With an eloquence which surprised himself he began to relate a wholly imaginary story. His fear-sharpened wits invented it at an incredible speed as he spoke, and the fervour of his declamation almost convinced him that he was speaking the truth. Nevertheless Reinold did not believe a word of it. That Marston's case-hardened conscience should be uneasily stirred into life by the awakening of love was improbable, to say the least of it. Reinold imagined that his subordinate's rebellion was designed principally to secure higher pay. Clever and clear thinking though he was, he did not guess its real object. He had been for so long the undisputed autocrat, the very fount and inspiration of half the crime of a continent that he had almost ceased to believe that he had, or could have, any serious rival. The fact was that Marston was tired of playing a subordinate part, and his unscrupulous mind had decided to stake everything upon a desperate battle for the mastery.

"Also," Marston went on, "I think I am getting too old for my job. I am losing my nerve, and you wouldn't like one of your perfect plans to fail owing to bad management ——"

"That's your funeral," said Reinold brutally. "My perfect plans, as you call them, are all perfect

enough to protect me whatever happens. If you fail you pay the penalty, but there is never any evidence to bring me into it. You know the arrangements as well as I do. Our men are paid highly because of the risk, and if they are caught they are supplied with the best possible defence. If they are sentenced their families get separation allowances, and their job is kept open for them when they come out—if they keep their mouths shut. If they try and give the show away they know what will happen. Only two of them tried it. One was an open verdict, and the other either accidental death or death by misadventure—I forget which. That was before your time."

Marston found it easier, in his present state of mind, to let Reinold carry on the conversation. So long as one of them was talking he was satisfied and listened attentively. He sat motionless and returned the other's steady gaze. The cripple was looking him in the eyes—very well, let him look. The more a person concentrates his gaze upon one particular spot the less he can see what is going on elsewhere. Marston's hand, which had been resting on the arm of his chair, steadily and slowly, very slowly, sank downwards, and with infinite care his elbow began to straighten. The movement was like the hands of a clock—so slow that it was not noticeable. His hand took fully five minutes to move six inches.

Every time the conversation stopped the hand stopped, every time it started the hand began to move. Everything depended on slowness.

"We need not talk about your future as my assistant," continued Reinold. "There will not be one. The mere fact of you threatening me to-night means that I can never trust you again. As I have said before, I am not a man of action, and I do not propose to arm myself like a pirate chief every time one of my own staff wants to interview me. For one thing it is far too melodramatic. Also it is inconvenient. What will become of our reputation as a respectable business house, which is one of our greatest assets, if people come into the office and find this sort of thing going on?"

All this time Marston's arm was gradually and slowly getting lower and lower. His elbow was now nearly straight.

"There are two alternatives. I can shoot you now and destroy the—er—evidence at leisure, assisted by those very excellent furnaces. I take it that, as you came here with more than half a mind to murder me, you took care that no one knew where you were going?"

To discuss with a prospective victim the exact method of his approaching end was typical of the man's warped and savage barbarity.

"At least two persons knew I was coming here,"

interposed Marston, his arm moving another fiftieth of an inch.

"That is too obvious a lie. The other alternative is to dismiss you from our service. In that case I should, of course, ensure my own safety by retaining the knife that you overlooked fifteen years ago. It would be quite useless for you to attempt to regain possession of it. I need hardly say that it would not be kept here, but in some bank or safe deposit. Further, in order to prevent accidents—to me—instructions would be given that in the event of any attack or attempted attack on me the knife would be at once handed over to the police with the other evidence which they require. That, I think, would safeguard me pretty effectually."

A look almost of admiration passed over Marston's face, despite himself. The cripple's plans were, as always, fool-proof—everything provided for, everything foreseen. More vividly than ever Marston realized that Reinold's power would never cease until his death. The elbow straightened yet another half degree, and Marston's fingers touched something smooth and hard. His hand, now completely hidden by the chair, closed upon it carefully and silently.

"On second thoughts," continued Reinold, playing with his victim with fiendish cruelty, "I think the first solution of the difficulty is the best. There

is not only the question of safeguarding myself—ourselves—from danger, but there is also a rebel to be punished." For the first time he raised his voice, and an angry note of steely hardness replaced the former irony.

"Twice before have people been misguided enough to try and betray us, and twice they have paid the penalty. You have threatened the head of our organization—the unforgivable sin. I see no reason why you should escape punishment. No one knows you are here. No one shall know. Remember those furnaces, Marston."

Was it imagination, or was his finger tightening on the trigger?

Marston's eyes suddenly left Reinold's face and stared hard at the door behind him. Their anxious expression of concentration relaxed into a smile of recognition and hope. No actor ever had more inducement to register emotion naturally. Reinold half turned in his chair and cast a rapid glance over his shoulder. Only for a fraction of a second he looked away, for there was nothing to see, but it was enough.

Marston's waiting hand swung up like lightning from behind the arm of his chair, and the heavy poker he was holding whistled through the air and fell with terrific force. There was a dull cracking noise and the cripple fell sideways out of his chair.

For an instant his head lolled against the desk, and then his body subsided limply on to the floor.

Marston gave a long sigh and stood up to stretch his cramped limbs. Still holding the poker in his hand, he took out his handkerchief and wiped his streaming forehead. Then with unnecessary care he laid the poker on the floor and eagerly seized the parcel on the desk. Ripping off the paper he took out a long double-edged hunting-knife with a stained leather handle. Further search in the deed-box revealed the sheath. He left it there and tossed the knife in after it. Then he picked up the box, carried it into the laboratory next door and shot the whole contents into one of the brightly glowing metallurgical furnaces.

Not until then did he look at the still form on the floor. One look was ample. His next proceeding was peculiar. He pulled a pair of motoring gloves from his pocket and put them on. Bending down and drawing Reinold's left arm from under him, he took the watch from the wrist and held it to his ear. Next he deliberately struck it a smart blow on the desk and listened once more. Satisfied, he cleaned it with his handkerchief and restrapped it in place. Then he picked up the poker and cleaned the handle with the same handkerchief. When this was done to his satisfaction he laid it down by the body and turned his attention to the deed-box. He polished

its japanned surface with extreme care, well knowing the dangers of leaving finger-prints. While doing so he caught his wrist on the sharp edge of the lock. It made a small scratch, and he interrupted his work for a few seconds to dab it with his handkerchief. It stopped bleeding almost at once, so he finished his cleaning and walked across to the telephone. Taking off the receiver he waited for a moment.

"Number, please," came a voice.

"Put me on to the police station," was the astounding reply.

Another interval.

"Hello. This is Mr. Reinold's office speaking. Yes, Reinold of Gray's Buildings. Mr. Reinold has just been murdered. I thought you would like to know. Good-bye."

He hung up the receiver and left the room by the fire-escape, disregarding the frantic ringing of the exchange.

CHAPTER II

MR. GARSIDE'S DISCOVERY

SAM GARSIDE, clerk in charge of the cloak-room at Southbourne Station, opened the tin box containing his midday meal and sniffed suspiciously.

"Whativver's t'missus been giving me?" he asked himself.

Further investigation revealed cold tea, home-made teacake, cheese and a slice of cold beef, all of which seemed perfectly good and wholesome, as was only to be expected from a careful wife like Mrs. Garside.

Sam's house in Wakeford Street was conspicuous for its trim neatness, even among neighbours who set a very high standard in this respect. It was, one might say, a temple in which comfort was sacrificed to cleanliness, an asylum devoted to housewifery gone mad. The door and cellar steps were scoured so diligently that it was an offence to fulfil their destiny by treading upon them; mercifully Mrs. Garside had no children. The front room was swept and garnished so thoroughly that it remained unopened and unused lest its spotless tidiness be

disturbed. Mrs. Garside's hair rarely saw the light of day and lived for the most part under cover of a duster which was tightly pinned over it, whereby it grew thin, straggly and lifeless. In the kitchen, which was used as the sitting-room, the sofa was permanently inaccessible to the comfort-seeker, for on it reposed the Sunday fender wrapped in newspaper—a complicated structure of bright brass, encumbered with the maximum number of useless knobs and excrescences. Every Saturday this was carefully polished at the cost of much time and labour ready for its state appearance on the Sabbath, which left the sofa free for—Mr. Garside? By no means. Free for the week-day fender which took its place. Mrs. Garside never had time to go to the Pictures with her husband, for she was always too busy cleaning. And yet she frequently wondered why he spent his evenings at the "Golden Fleece." She was a good housewife but a poor psychologist.

Sam sniffed again as he unwrapped his dinner. The aroma which affronted his not over-sensitive nostrils seemed to come, after all, from the other end of the office. Now he came to think of it, he had noticed it several times during the course of the morning. However, from the nature of his employment he was used to assorted smells, so he began to eat his dinner without further ado, assisting his digestion by laboriously solving a cross-word puzzle.

Although Sam was an ardent Socialist and a persistent railer against all forms of Capital and Unearned Increment, he saw nothing inconsistent in taking his weekly wages from one of the largest capitalled companies in the country, and in trying to win thousands of pounds by a cross-word puzzle which had so many alternative solutions that success was a mere matter of luck.

It was about an hour later that he really began to get uneasy. He had occasion to go to the far end of the office to fetch a bag of golf clubs and a cabin trunk, and the smell was really overpowering, far worse than it was at the public counter end. Sam looked round to see what could be the cause of it. There were no crates or packing-cases anywhere near; nothing but trunks, bags and suit-cases, which ought in the nature of things to be inodorous. But on one of the suit-cases—a large one which stood in the sunlight—was a sticky stain from which oozed a thin and sluggish stream of dark viscid fluid, around which buzzed a little group of flies. There was no doubt about it: the smell was stronger here than elsewhere.

Sam pulled the suit-case off the rack and turned it on its side. The label showed that it had been in his custody for over a week. He idly pressed the sliding catches, and was surprised to see them fly open. Looking round to see that he was unobserved, he lifted the lid, determined to solve the mystery of the unholy smell which some forgetful person had inflicted upon him. Perhaps somebody had packed their Sunday joint and forgotten it, or been prevented from fetching it; perhaps it was a supply of meat for the dog. Possibly it was tinned stuff badly sealed. Sam could remember a consignment of salmon which blew its tins and almost raised the roof before it could be handed over to the care of the sanitary inspector. Anyhow, it was not going to poison the air of Mr. Garside's domain any longer.

One look solved the mystery. Down came the lid with a bang and the cloud of flies buzzed loudly as they reluctantly but expertly sought safety. Sam stood up with a face as white as chalk, and his heart thumped violently. He felt rather sick as he hurried out, disregarding several waiting customers. He crossed the main platform and tapped at the door of the station-master's office.

"Wheer's t'boss?" he demanded.

"Busy," replied the inquiry clerk curtly.

"I want to see him."

"You can't."

"You go tell him I've got a police job for him, lad, and not so much of your lip."

Garside's manner carried conviction, and the inquiry clerk went through to the inner office.

"What is it?" asked the station-master irritably a moment later.

"There's a man's leg in a suit-case in my office, sir. Been there a tidy bit by the look of it."

"A what?" The station-master's tone was pure amazement.

"A man's leg, sir. Leastways it may be a woman's. I don't know. It stinks something awful, anyway."

"Well, come on, and don't stand there talking."

The station-master seized his hat, for he was bald and somewhat sensitive about it, and hurried off, followed by Sam. The inquiry clerk looked regretfully after them. He was not allowed to leave the office, and sadly realized that he was fated to miss all this excitement. He was helpless, bound by the fetters of his weekly pay envelope.

The station-master commanded Sam to get on with his work, for by this time several impatient travellers were rapping on the counter of the cloak-room. While Sam was satisfying their demands his superior dragged the suit-case out of sight round the corner and opened the lid.

Yes, there was no mistake about it. There lay the evidences of murder—a leg, partly wrapped up in a torn fragment of sheet. Even the untrained eye could guess that it had belonged to a man. Its muscular appearance and the size of the foot were

definitely masculine. The thigh muscles had been cut through and the bone cleanly severed above the knee with a saw; a sprinkling of red stained bone dust and the total absence of splintering bore witness to this.

The station-master was unused to such things and forbore to inspect it in greater detail. He shut down the lid and went back to his office, telling Sam not to interfere with the suit-case or let anyone else do so. In response to his telephone call Inspector Ridley of the Southbourne Police arrived a few minutes later. Once more the lid was lifted and the leg exposed to view.

"What are you going to do about it?" inquired the station-master.

"Borrow your telephone and notify the coroner," was the reply.

Sam looked disappointed. This was very tame. They managed these things better in Hollywood. By all the laws of the film Ridley should have drawn a revolver from his pocket, jumped on his horse and dashed off across country to arrest the murderer.

The inspector tried three different numbers before he succeeded in getting hold of the coroner; once he got in touch with him, however, he immediately got permission to remove the leg and do as he thought fit. He then rang up the police station and ordered two plain clothes men to be sent round at once.

"I'll take the suit-case along with me, and we'll get the doctor to examine it," he said. "And when my men come I'll put them on to watch. It's a confounded nuisance having to take two men off their work for it. Still, we can't take any risks with a murderer. Is there a convenient place where they can sit—a place where they can see the cloak-room without being too conspicuous?"

"Yes, they could sit just behind the bookstall."

"Right. I'll leave this whistle with your man—what's his name? Garside—and he can blow it if the owner of the suit-case turns up."

"Surely," objected the station-master, "he won't be such a fool as to come back for it?"

"You wouldn't think so," admitted Ridley. "I shouldn't come near the place if I were him. But you never know. There have been lots of cases where people have disposed of bodies in this way and would have got away with it if they hadn't come back. But they always do for some reason or other. Mahon did, if you remember, when he killed Emily Kaye at Pevensey. As a matter of fact he didn't actually leave parts of the body in the luggage office, but he left blood-stained clothes, which led to his arrest and to the discovery of the body, so the principle of it is the same. There have been lots of other cases like this too."

Ridley's apparently futile precautions were justified, and with very little loss of time. Early the same evening a big, powerfully-built man strolled up to the cloak-room and tossed a ticket on to the counter. Mr. Garside looked at it and turned away to hide his excitement. XD 1206. That number was seared into his brain indelibly. For the last four hours he had been on the watch for it, thrilled to his very soul at being the centrepiece and figure-head of a real front-page Sunday newspaper crime. Coo! what a tale to tell them at the "Golden Fleece"! Sam shivered with pleasurable excitement at the thought of it, at the thought of how George Higgins, the champion tale-teller of the bar parlour, would have to take a back seat when shown the photographs of Mr. Garside (marked with a cross), the discoverer of the body.

He took the ticket and gazed round the racks and shelves as if in search of the absent suit-case. While doing so he contrived to have a good look at the owner of the fatal pink slip, and was amazed to see him leaning calmly on the counter smoking a cigarette like any ordinary person. Coo! what a nerve the chap must have! He didn't even seem frightened. Looked just like an ordinary business man, rather prosperous in a quiet way.

"When did you leave it, sir?" asked Sam.

This was a quite unnecessary question, but he

could not resist asking it. It is not everybody who has a chance to talk to a murderer just before his arrest. That would wipe George Higgins's eye for him. Visions of free beer from enthralled audiences occupied Mr. Garside's imagination.

"Last Friday week," said the stranger, flicking the ash off his cigarette as unconcerned as you like.

Sam fumbled in his pocket, put the whistle to his mouth and blew a resounding blast. It was the proudest moment of his life. As its echoes died away in the smoke-grimed roof of the station the plain clothes men stepped out from behind the bookstall.

The official boots of Detective Officer Purley and his companion crossed the platform slowly and with due solemnity, each ponderous footfall marking off relentlessly as fate the suspect's last moments of freedom. The big man started at the sound of the whistle, but made no effort to move from his position. Purley on his part did not quicken his pace, because he was between his prey and the only exit. He was sure of his capture and approached in almost a reverential spirit, as befitted the solemnity of the occasion. He ranged alongside the counter and placed his hand on the waiting man's shoulder.

Everything passed off quietly. Mr. Garside's half-formed expectations of gun-play were not

realized. There was not even a rough and tumble fight in which he could take a heroic part, with subsequent thanks from the bench and presentation of a gold watch, suitably inscribed. Five minutes later the big red faced man and his escort arrived safely at the police station, to find everything in a state of confusion.

About ten minutes previously a most extraordinary telephone message had been taken down by the astonished officer in the charge room.

"This is Mr. Reinold's office speaking. Yes, Reinold of Gray's Buildings. Mr. Reinold has just been murdered," said the metallic, impersonal voice of the instrument. "I thought you would like to know!"

This message was taken straight in to Inspector Ridley, who looked at it and grunted.

"Sounds like a damn silly practical joke," he snapped. "Send somebody round to Reinold's office to have a look, anyway. If they go straight away they may catch the fool who sent it."

Ridley had been rather irritable all that afternoon. An inspector in whose law-abiding and respectable district a disarticulated human limb is found is apt to be jarred out of his usual equanimity. All his available time is spent in thinking over the problem and devising ways and means to find the body, to discover the murderer and to satisfy a

clamouring crowd of reporters without at the same time giving away any information of real value.

Reinold's office was quite near, so a few minutes sufficed for P.C. Roberts to get there. The front door of the building was shut and locked, and ringing the caretaker's bell produced no response. Roberts pressed the button five or six times and distinctly heard the bell shrilling in the basement. He then knocked until the empty corridors re-echoed with the rattling of the door.

The constable knew the district well, and knew that the only other entrance to the offices was by the fire-escapes at the back. He left the front door and went round to the rear of the premises, which involved a walk down side streets. The door of the foundry yard was locked, but the wall was not very high. It was, however, covered with broken glass to discourage unauthorized entrance. Under the circumstances something had to be done. Roberts looked up at the office windows. One solitary, green-shaded light was burning on the second floor. The constable took off his cape and folded it carefully. He then drew out his truncheon and knocked off one or two of the sharpest and most prominent pieces of glass. Throwing the folded cape across the top of the wall he scrambled over and dropped into the muddy yard. A quick glance at the cape showed, to his relief, that the stout cloth had not

been damaged, so he put it on again and pocketed his truncheon.

The yard seemed deserted. Even the kennel of the caretaker's dog was empty. Roberts looked through all the ground floor windows and saw no one. He then began to climb the rusty iron steps of the fire-escape. As far as he could see the first floor offices were empty, but he could not see them all from the little platform where he stood, and the door which led from it into the building was locked. He began the ascent to the second floor, and as he did so sniffed suspiciously. P.C. Roberts had been in the Army, and the smell of cordite was no new thing to him. He quickened his pace and once more took his truncheon from his pocket.

It did not occur to him that he was doing anything out of the ordinary in advancing single-handed towards this ominous smell. It was his job and he did it. Courage is, after all, relative and not absolute, and the fact can be recognized without disparagement. The most commonplace individuals undertake risks in their daily work which would appal the most stout-hearted man who was not used to them. The miner faces light-heartedly perils which might easily perturb a holder of the Victoria Cross, whose exploits in the air would in turn terrify the miner. The writer himself has seen a six-foot policeman, whose courage was prob-

ably in no way inferior to that of P.C. Roberts, collapse in a dead faint on witnessing a young woman doctor make the first incision of a post-mortem examination, which to her was merely an interesting case. He has watched too, from the big double windows of operating theatre, the building of a new block of offices. Towering, six-story structures they were, built up in the modern way as a filmy framework of steel girders, to be clothed later with skirts of glass and concrete. He has watched the tiny figures of men sitting, standing and even walking unconcernedly along the slender metal lattice work, regardless of the fifty-foot drop below them, and has turned his head away, faint and sick with the thought of being up there himself. Put these iron-nerved men in the operating theatre though, to watch the clean and beautiful routine of an abdominal operation, and their courage would evaporate and their knees turn to trembling insecurity, merely because they were not used to it.

Armed with a light wooden truncheon, P.C. Roberts calmly prepared to tackle a possible enemy carrying a pistol. As it turned out there was no enemy and no danger of any sort, but the constable could not know this when he climbed the fire-escape.

The odds were utterly unfair. Why do the authorities allow it? Why should men, valued servants of the State, husbands and fathers of

families, be compelled to endanger their lives when they could be adequately armed at a trivial cost? There is a very good reason. It is not callousness in high places; it is not that chief constables and superintendents, themselves exempt from lonely night patrols, are indifferent to the risks run by their subordinates. But it is an extremely rare occurrence in this country for a police officer to be shot in the execution of his duty. So rare that for practical purposes the danger does not exist. In the few cases in which it has happened the assault has been so sudden and unexpected that the result would have been just the same if the officer had been armed. A revolver would not have saved the unfortunate constable who stopped Browne and Kennedy at Stapleford Abbots. Desperadoes of this type shoot at sight, and shoot to kill. So that the saving of life on this score would be negligible.

On the other hand, if police officers were armed their opponents would naturally follow suit, and the evil and almost extinct tradition of gun-play would rapidly be revived. It is the considered opinion of experienced Scotland Yard men that arming the force would lead to a greatly increased casualty list, and that the present heavy penalties inflicted upon armed criminals are a sufficient deterrent.

On the second landing Roberts stopped for a few seconds to regain his breath, and then looked

through the window into a large room furnished with quiet and comfortable luxury. The shaded lamp he had noticed from below stood on a roll-top desk in an alcove, and in its bright yellow circle of light lay that which exploded Ridley's practical joke theory into fragments.

Roberts gave a gasp of surprise and horror and tried the handle of the casement. It was not locked, so he slipped into the room and ran silently across the thick carpet to the desk. The body of Mr. Otto Reinold, the highly respected senior partner of Reinold's Foundry, was lying there huddled up in a pool of blood. One glance was enough to convince Roberts that the unfortunate man was dead. His head was horribly damaged, the whole of the right side of the skull being crushed in.

On receipt of this news by telephone Ridley at once jumped up and went round in haste. The mystery of the abandoned leg, which had vainly occupied his thoughts all the afternoon, and which by its overwhelming importance had swept into oblivion all the petty and trivial duties connected with minor offences which usually occupied him at this time, was itself thrust into the background by the startling news of this fresh tragedy. One of Euclid's axioms states that the whole is greater than its part. In police work, however, a whole corpse is no more important than part of a corpse, so perhaps it was merely the shock of a second murder that made it seem even more impressive than the first one.

Such was the state of affairs when Purley arrived at the police station with his prisoner. He was somewhat deflated to find his smart capture overshadowed, to find his inspector out and the charge room officer bursting with the news of another big case. He thought disgustedly that he might have been bringing in a mere drunk and disorderly instead of a man arrested on the gravest charge known to British justice.

However, it could not be helped. The owner of the suit-case was lodged in the cells for the time being, and Purley went round to Reinold's. The inspector was up to the eyes in his new investigations and seemed annoyed by the interruption. There is, after all, a limit to the number of things which one man can think about at the same time, and the inspector had reached that limit.

"The owner of the suit-case has turned up, sir," began Purley.

"Oh, has he? And what do you expect me to do about it?"

"Don't know, sir."

"Hell's bells!" said Ridley, "I can't do anything. I'm full up here, and I can't be in two places at the same time. What have you done with him?"

"Detained him, sir."

"Yes, I know that. I didn't suppose you'd kiss him good night and send him home. Have you found out anything about him yet? That's what I mean."

"No, sir." Purley had every right to be aggrieved by his reception, but he could realize how Ridley felt. Two murder mysteries in one day are rather too much of a good thing, even for the most enthusiastic police force. Besides, the average local inspector, however competent he may be, is not accustomed to murder cases. They are outside his usual province in a law-abiding country, and they upset his routine work.

"Well, find out what you can about him and let the Chief Constable know. If he says anything about Scotland Yard help, tell him I'm all for it."

With that Ridley went back to his scrutiny of the body and its surroundings, and Purley returned to his prisoner. He found him quite cheerful and contented. When the idea of obtaining legal aid was mentioned he scouted the thought of it.

"I don't want a solicitor. It won't be necessary," he said with a laugh.

Arrested for murder, and he actually laughed! Was he insane? Purley began to think so.

"Sit down and I'll tell you all about it in a few minutes," went on the red faced man calmly.

"Things look bad, but I can explain everything. Oh, you'll want it in writing, I suppose."

Purley produced a fountain pen and sheets of official foolscap. He also uttered the official warning that anything said would be taken down and might be used in evidence.

"In the first place," began the prisoner, "my name is Edgar Hemsworth."

"Occupation?" queried Purley automatically.

"Clinical assistant at St. John's Hospital. I work in the out patients' department. In the second place, you needn't trouble to look for a body belonging to that leg. Mind you, I don't blame you for arresting me. You couldn't very well do anything else. But the person who owns that leg is alive at the present moment."

Alive! Purley stared in open-mouthed astonishment, with deepening suspicion that the man was a madman. Had he intended to commit murder by instalments? First a leg and then an arm, and so on until his victim died? Horrible thought.

"Yes, alive. There's been no crime about it at all. Only a bit of absent-mindedness."

The prisoner crossed his legs composedly and went on to explain, to the length of several foolscap pages, and a great light dawned upon Purley as he wrote.

"You'll want me to prove all this," went on the

prisoner. That was exactly what Purley was thinking. "Ring up St. John's Hospital and ask them to send over somebody who knows me by sight. They've got a private branch exchange, by the way, so you'll have to ask the porter to put you through. I should suggest the house surgeon and the matron, but get anybody you like so that you know it isn't a put up job between us. Mind you, I don't say that all the staff know me. I work in the out patients' department and hardly ever go into the wards, so it's no good if you get a probationer who's never been outside her own ward. The dispensers know me, I think, and the out-patient porters and the porter at the front door. Then there's Mr. Barrington—he's the assistant surgeon—he knows me well enough. And the fireman's name is Fred. I don't know his other name, but it doesn't matter. He's a ginger-whiskered chap with tattooed arms. You can't mistake him."

By this time Major Sullivan, the Chief Constable, had arrived, and Purley told him the whole story.

"I was just going to ring up the Hospital, sir," he concluded.

"Right, get on with it, and we'll soon see if this chap's tale is all right. I'd better phone up Scotland Yard first, though. We shall want a bit of help, and we might as well get it now."

Five minutes sufficed the Chief Constable for this,

and then Purley got through to the Hospital. He was answered by the bored voice of the night porter at the front door.

"Will you put me through to the house surgeon, please?"

"I'll just see if he's in, sir. Yes, he is. Right, sir, you're through."

There was a whirr of a rotating handle.

"Hallo," said a fresh voice.

"Is that the house surgeon?" inquired Purley.

"Yes. Who is it?"

"Southbourne Police speaking, sir."

"Oh, is it about that inquest for to-morrow?"

"No, sir. Do you know Dr. Hemsworth?"

"Yes," was the mystified reply. "What about him?"

"Can you come over and identify him?"

"Why, has he had an accident?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, what's it all about, then? Do you want me to come over now?"

"Yes, please. The Chief Constable's waiting."

"Damn and blast! I was just going to bed. Won't it do to-morrow? Has he been drunk and disorderly or something?"

"I want you to come over," said Purley slowly and distinctly, tired of this cross-talk. "And bring

with you Fred, a ginger-whiskered fireman with tattooed arms ——"

"Help!" said the other end of the wire faintly.

"And the matron or any other responsible person who knows Dr. Hemsworth. If you can't do this he will probably be charged with murder. He says you can clear him if you come."

"Right-oh." The voice was more sober. "I'll collect Fred and his ginger whiskers and the rest of the party and come as soon as I can. Good-bye."

Just before the final click as the receiver was hung up Purley heard the voice of the unregenerate house surgeon say faintly, "Jumping Jerusalem! What a joy ride!"

Half an hour later an antiquated motor ambulance clanked up to the door of the Southbourne Police Station. From the driver's seat climbed down a young man in grey flannels and a muffler, which imperfectly concealed the collar of a vividly striped pair of pyjamas. He went round to the back of the van body and unbolted the door. Two women in nurses' uniform and a man in blue overalls got out. Purley conducted this strangely assorted group into the charge room, where they were accommodated with chairs round the newly lit fire.

"Came over straight away without waiting to dress properly," explained the youth in pyjamas. "The last train had gone and we couldn't get a taxi,

so we had to fetch out the old hospital bus. Sorry if I sounded a bit peeved on the phone, but I was up nearly all last night and wanted to get to bed early."

"We won't keep you long," said Major Sullivan.

He then briefly explained the incidents which had led to the arrest of Dr. Hemsworth.

"It didn't seem possible to explain away a thing like that," he concluded. "But his story sounds reasonable enough, and if you can confirm it we shall be able to release him at once."

There was a loud chuckle from the ginger-whiskered Fred, which hastily died away as the Chief Constable turned round.

"I didn't bring the matron," went on the house surgeon. "She doesn't know Dr. Hemsworth by sight, so I brought the sister and the staff nurse from the out-patient department instead. They both know him well."

"We'll take them first," said Major Sullivan. "Will you come this way, please?"

The two nurses followed him, and were ushered along the empty and desolate passages to the cells. After a few minutes they returned.

"Are you sure?" inquired the Chief Constable, as they resumed their seats near the fire.

"Quite sure," said the sister. The staff nurse nodded her head in confirmation. "It's Dr. Hems-

worth right enough. I've seen him twice a week for three years, and nurse here ——"

"For eighteen months."

"Will you take the others along then, Purley? Not that I'm doubting your word, ladies, but in a case like this we must have ample corroboration of every detail."

The iron-barred gate clanged behind Fred and the house surgeon, and they were ushered into Dr. Hemsworth's cell. The occupant looked up with a wry smile.

"Sorry to drag you out at this time of night, Burgoyne," he said. "Do you know me or don't you?"

"I do," replied the house surgeon, pulling his muffler more closely round his neck, for the cell was not too warm. "That's Dr. Hemsworth all right."

"Do you know me, Fred?"

"Ay, I do that, doctor."

"Right. Well, go along and tell them all about it, and then they'll let me out of here."

The little procession went back to the charge room. Major Sullivan ran his eye over Purley's carefully written sheets and took his stand by the mantelpiece.

"Dr. Hemsworth was arrested," he began, "because he left a leg in the cloak-room at the

station. He states that it was amputated in your hospital ten days ago."

"Yes, there was an amputation then. Osteo-sarcoma—left leg," murmured the house surgeon. In these days of conservative surgery amputations are few and far between even in hospitals. They are the surgeon's confession of failure and easily remembered.

"Could you identify the leg, doctor?"

"I think so. Have you got it here?"

"Yes." At a motion from his superior Purley produced the suit-case and exposed its contents to view. Mr. Burgoyne bent over and examined it carefully.

"That looks like it," he said. "Left leg, swelling in the head of the tibia, taken off at the right level." He unfolded the bit of sheet still further and uncovered the foot. "It is the same," he continued, "I'm sure of it. There's a hammer toe there that I recognize. I remember the patient saying in the anæsthetic room that he wouldn't be bothered with it any more after the leg was taken off."

"Can you swear to it, doctor?"

"Yes. I can show you the patient if you like. He's still in the ward."

"I don't think that will help much," said Major

Sullivan. "If you're satisfied, that's good enough. Were you present at the operation?"

"Yes. I was assisting."

The Chief Constable turned to Fred.

"What can you tell us about it?" he asked. "Dr. Hemsworth has told us how it came into his possession, and we want to hear the whole story from you to check his statement."

Fred grinned amiably.

"Eh, I didn't think he wor going to get into bother over it," he began. "This 'ere leg wor sent down to me—let's see, it would be a week last Friday. I remember that 'cos it wor wage day, and I had five bob extra that week."

"That's right," put in Burgoyne. "Friday is Mr. Barstow's operating day."

"It came down to t'boiler room to be destroyed," went on the fireman. "Same as all of 'em, it had a label tied on signed by Mr. Burgoyne 'ere."

"A label? What for?" asked the Chief Constable. A discarded leg whose destination was the boiler furnace did not seem to him to be of sufficient value or importance to warrant a label.

"It's a rule of the hospital, sir," explained Burgoyne. "All limbs sent down to be burnt have to have a signature, so that no loopholes are left for crime, I suppose. Like cremation certificates."

"Yes, I see. Very good rule too," admitted Major Sullivan. "If anybody could have a leg burnt in the boiler room with no questions asked it would be an easy way of getting rid of a body. Why wasn't this one destroyed?"

"Well, sir," replied Fred, "Dr. Hemsworth told me a month or two ago that he wanted an arm or a leg for some injection experiments. He didn't care which it was, but he asked me to save him the first one that was sent down. So I saved this one—we don't get many of 'em, you know—and let him know about it, and he came and took it away and gave me five bob for it."

The Chief Constable heaved a sigh of satisfaction. Everything tallied exactly with Dr. Hemsworth's statement. There was no question about it, the whole thing was a false alarm. He beckoned to Purley and spoke to him in an undertone. The detective officer picked up a large bunch of keys and left the room.

"I am very much obliged to you, ladies and gentlemen," said Major Sullivan formally. "It may compensate you for your trouble to know that you have completely cleared the doctor of all suspicion."

Here Hemsworth entered the room, followed by Purley.

"I must apologize for your detention, doctor,"

went on the Chief Constable. "I need hardly say that you are now at liberty."

"Guiltless in the eyes of the law, eh?" smiled Hemsworth.

"Absolutely. But you must admit we had some excuse for suspicion."

"Yes, it was all my fault for leaving the beastly thing there. No, I don't want it back now. It's not fresh enough. Nor the suit-case. That's not fresh enough either, and it's only a cheap one, anyway. You can burn them. I shall have to wait till the next amputation for my specimen, and spend another five shillings on Fred here. It'll only be half a crown next time, Fred. Wholesale price, you know. Reduction for a quantity."

"All right, sir. That'll do for me. They cost me nowt, so it's all profit."

"One thing I do know," continued Hemsworth. "I shall take jolly good care not to leave it in the cloak-room next time!"

The hospital party rose to go.

"Can we give you a lift?" asked the house surgeon. "We've got the old hospital bus here. You've had a taste of the cells, so you might as well go home in the ambulance and make a real good night of it!"

Hemsworth looked at his watch, which had just been returned to him by Purley.

"Thanks, I will. It's too late to get a bus now."

The charge room slowly emptied itself, and Purley, who remained behind, heard renewed apologies from the Chief Constable, good-humoured laughs from Dr. Hemsworth and the slam of the ambulance door. He went over to the charge room table and looked at the suit-case and at the embers of the dying fire.

"And how the hell do they think I'm going to burn this?" he said in an aggrieved tone.

He heard the clank of the starting handle outside. Struck by a brilliant idea, he seized the suit-case and rushed out just as the ancient engine burst into wheezy life.

"Here, Fred," he said.

"Hallo?" The ginger-whiskered stoker leaned out from the front seat.

"You've forgotten your luggage. Take this along and pop it in your boiler, there's a good chap."

Purley shoved the suit-case in just as the ambulance moved off, and turned to meet the amused smile of his chief.

"I'd better go along and see the inspector now, sir," he said. "He'd like to know about this."

"He certainly would. I'd almost forgotten about him and his murder. I'll just telephone up to Scotland Yard and let them know that one of the cases

is a wash-out, and then I'll follow you. We want to find out as much as we can about Reinold before the Scotland Yard man comes. Mustn't leave everything for him."

CHAPTER III

THE FIRM OF REINOLD'S

MARSTON was highly satisfied with his day's work. Twenty years of assorted crime had so toughened his conscience that he was unaffected by remorse or regret, and his only feeling was one of relief at the breakage of the fetters which had weighed upon him for so long. Reinold was out of the way for good, which ought to promote him from third place—and a bad third—to second in command of the organization which hid itself under the respectable shield of Reinold's Foundry. Now only one man—Wayland Harrison—stood between him and the absolute ownership which he desired, which had become the overmastering passion of his life.

Marston had chafed and finally revolted, not at being compelled to live as a criminal—for his was a warped and twisted mentality and he would have done this in any case—but at being kept in a subordinate position by Reinold and his partner, Harrison, the redoubtable Number Two in the firm of Reinold's. What Marston wanted was to have the business in his own hands, to exercise the almost

unlimited power wielded by its directors, to give orders rather than to take them. The morality of the orders concerned him not at all, but his egotistical individualism, surviving the rigid discipline to which it had been subjected, had caused his hatred of control to increase until it amounted almost to a monomania.

He went over in his own mind every detail of the last tragic interview with his late employer. Some faint lingering traces of almost atrophied conscience made him refrain from acknowledging his deed as a murder. He had struck in self-defence, he argued, at a man who was threatening him with a pistol, which he fully intended to use. So far he was correct in arguing that it was self-defence, though he realized full well that it would be almost impossible to prove this if ever the necessity arose. Moreover, the fact remained that he had entered Reinold's office to kill, and the pistol incident was merely a piece of unrehearsed by-play.

In any case, nothing remained to connect him with the crime; of that he was certain. He smiled with satisfaction as he recalled the perfection of his precautionary measures. This was fortunate, for it was just as essential to conceal his guilt from the firm of Reinold's as from the police. If any suspicion once fell on him he was a doomed man—the vengeance of Number Two was as certain as that

of the law and far swifter, because it was unhampered by rules of evidence or scruples of fair play, because it disregarded everything except ruthless and merciless retribution.

Marston had thought out the details with great care, and he chuckled as he realized that it was a job worthy of Reinold's tuition for clear, clean-cut neatness. Everything had gone according to schedule except for the actual murder itself. That was cruder and messier than Marston intended, but it was unavoidable. Moreover, it was the victim's own fault. If Reinold had not given his visitor such a bad quarter of an hour with his unexpected pistol, thought Marston with grim humour, he would have left the world in a more tidy manner.

And then the unheard of device of ringing up the police to notify them of the crime—that was a stroke of real genius, and Marston was almost sorry that Reinold was not there to appreciate it. It was just such a bold move as he loved, which looked incredibly foolish and risky and yet which fitted into his plans as one of their most potent safeguards.

If Marston had merely removed his own property from the deed-box and taken it away with him suspicion would have been aroused at once, and suspicion was always enough for Number Two, who never waited for evidential proof in matters of discipline. By burning all the contents of the box,

which he knew to contain a vast and almost unique collection of blackmail stock-in-trade, suspicion was distributed amongst a large number of people.

It was a pity that Marston, who intended to become in due course the sole owner and proprietor of Reinold's Foundry, should thus be forced to destroy valuable property in which he had a reversionary interest, but it was necessary so long as the relentless Number Two was alive.

Marston's object in putting his own knife into the furnace was twofold, and part of a carefully thought-out plan of campaign. First, it would be so changed and damaged by the intense heat as to be beyond legal identification and useless as evidence of the old crime which had formed Reinold's hold over him. Secondly, to the select few who knew what the box contained the presence of its remains in the furnace would tend to divert attention from himself. Surely only one to whom the knife was of no importance would thus leave it carelessly on the premises. Anyone who was really interested in it would take it away and sink it to the bottom of the deepest available river.

Reinold's was a curious firm. It carried on a large and perfectly legitimate business as a brass foundry, wherein all was open and aboveboard. Its balance sheet was audited by accountants of standing and its income tax returns were meticulously accurate. Workshops, offices, books and staff necessary for the foundry were all genuine, as indeed they had to be in order to turn over the amount of trade they did. But behind all this there was a more extensive business still, with wide and far-reaching ramifications in the underworld, which was a closely guarded secret.

The auditors never knew of its existence—nor could they be expected to, when it was run as an absolutely separate concern and concealed with extreme and elaborate care. The Income Tax Commissioners were in equal ignorance. It was even more profitable than the legitimate trade, which was in fact only carried on as a screen.

The late Otto Reinold and the still living Wayland Harrison—Number Two—were the leaders, owners and mainsprings of the concern. Reinold had once been a solicitor, and Harrison a private inquiry agent, both of which occupations offer considerable scope for the collection of evidence suitable for blackmail. When these two clever and unscrupulous men first began to develop their idea their methods showed the unremitting care and caution which afterwards became the secret of their success and secured their immunity from exposure.

Reinold did not continue his professional work, because of the danger of attracting attention by undertaking shady cases. Rather than risk the

limelight of publicity by being struck off the rolls he gave up his profession altogether and devoted himself entirely to the business. At that period there was plenty to do in building up and developing the lawful side of it. At the same time the two partners slowly and carefully went ahead with their other schemes.

Their employés were gradually replaced by men like Marston—men who had nothing to lose by crime, or who had everything to gain by a well-paid post in an established firm. Most of them were held secure in their allegiance by the knowledge that no other firm would employ them, or by the power which the firm possessed to send them to well-earned sentences in gaol. According to the strength of the bonds which bound them so was their work graduated.

Marston had risen to his present post as manager partly because of his undoubted ability and partly because of the deadly evidence which Reinold had kept in the deed-box on the top shelf of the safe. Such a man could be trusted with any secret, could be sent on any mission, however important, without fear of treachery, for the price of betrayal was the price of his own life. It goes without saying that he was a very valuable asset to the firm. Moreover, he was an educated man with a profession of his own, and in order not to lose touch with this

entirely he was allowed two half days a week leave of absence from his work. It was understood on these occasions that he was travelling in the interests of the firm, but Reinold and Harrison were the only people who knew where he really went. Reinold, with a most unusual lack of foresight for him, sometimes protested at this waste of the firm's time, as he called it, and he was justified in his protest in that Marston's professional work had not been of much practical use. Harrison always argued that at any time it might be of vital importance, and carried his point. Marston was delighted, for he was always glad to get away for a few hours into a fresh atmosphere, where he was free from the conventions and repressions of Reinold's Foundry, free to work openly in the face of the world at the work he loved best, without that ever-present espionage and constant supervision which necessarily loomed so large in such a precarious business, free to mingle with men of his own kind without ulterior motive and with nothing to conceal.

Nearly all the employés, from Marston downwards, were in a chronic state of seething discontent. They were willing to admit, in theory, that they were well paid and well treated. Similarly lions in captivity may be well fed and well treated, but the bars of the cage are always there. As performing wild beasts are kept under control by harsh

discipline and the terror of the whip and pitchfork, so the staff of this extraordinary and apparently prosaic brass foundry was kept under by Reinold and his partner, two iron-willed men whose rule was founded upon fear, whose authority was enforced by threats, whose praise was merely absence of condemnation, whose interests were exclusively selfish, and whose hands were notoriously swifter to punish than to reward.

And yet all this lay beneath the surface and was carefully concealed. In order to fit in with the reputable and useful work done by these men as a camouflage for their hidden activities, a veneer of courtesy and conventionality was strictly imposed upon them, and overlay all the discontent and unrest. It was ordained that in all things commercial routine should be followed, and to this end the staff, especially the black-coated portion of it, was trained to a high pitch of formal politeness and deference, which was difficult for them to learn and distasteful for them to practise.

For example, Ginger Brown, whose limited physical and intellectual gifts, previously exercised as a sneak-thief and pickpocket, did not allow him to rise higher in the firm than the rank of packer in the warehouse, found great difficulty in addressing Mr. Harding, the chief clerk, as sir, even though Mr. Harding wore a stiff dickey and a clean collar

nearly every day. This was partly because Ginger Brown had a rooted dislike for honorific titles of any kind, possibly due to occasional disastrous interviews with My Lords and Your Worships. Also he had known the chief clerk in former days as Slick-fingered Tom—a name earned by Mr. Harding's skill as a forger.

When Ginger Brown first joined the firm and greeted Mr. Harding in familiar fashion, the latter pointed out to him the change in their positions and social status. Not from any motives of snobbery or affectation on his part, he was careful to explain, but solely because the laws of the house and the safety of its employés demanded it. Did shirt-sleeved packers in other warehouses hail their chief clerks by nicknames? They did not, and what they did not do Reinold's must not do—with knobs on. For, above all things and in all ways, Reinold's must always appear to the outsider to be nothing more than a brass foundry and metallurgical workshop.

Mr. Brown, undisciplined freelance as he was, did not believe this and scrupled not to say so with painful directness. With many expectorations he laid bare his mind on the subject of jacks in office who were too bloody well stuck up to recognize their old pals.

It happened that Mr. Wayland Harrison overheard this conversation and promptly declared the

meeting closed. Being a man of action rather than words, being handy with his fists and being several stones heavier than the under-sized and slum-bred Mr. Brown, he began by knocking him senseless with a straight left to the jaw. He then picked up the body, slung it over his enormous shoulder and carried it upstairs to the Directors' office. Meantime Mr. Harding went unconcernedly on with his work. He had seen this happen before. As soon as Mr. Brown was in a fit condition to listen to reason Wayland Harrison ceased to take any interest in him and handed him over to the care of Mr. Reinold, whose vitriolic tongue scarified the bemused and unhappy packer for the best part of half an hour.

Reinold was a master of savage and scathing irony, brutal invective and biting sarcasm, and he began by comprehensively and detrimentally reviewing Ginger Brown's ancestry, parentage and personal appearance. He then pointed out in detail his physical defects, which were so numerous as to be exceeded only by his intellectual deficiencies, also catalogued and classified; following this up with a gloomy but probably accurate prophecy as to his ultimate destination in the future life. Finally, reserving the most relevant point to the last, and having reduced his victim to such a state as to appreciate it most thoroughly, the quiet but cutting

voice of the crippled Reinold commented on the circumstances which had led to Ginger's employment by the firm—a tactical error on the part of Mr. Brown, who had attempted to pick the pocket of Mr. Wayland Harrison at Doncaster Races—and reminded him of the latter's ability to discharge him from his well-paid job and to hand him over to the police. As a matter of fact, nothing would have induced Reinold or Harrison to do this, because it would have meant very awkward questions as to why they had waited the best part of three months before reporting the incident. However, this point was too subtle for Mr. Brown, and he took the threat in all seriousness, as he was meant to do.

At the close of this discourse Mr. Brown decided, as well as his aching jaw and obfuscated mind would allow, that on the whole he preferred Mr. Harrison's methods to Mr. Reinold's, and he left the office fully convinced of the importance of obeying the letter of the law as laid down by those autocrats.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEXT ON THE LIST

MR. WAYLAND HARRISON was utterly devoid of sentiment, and the death of the man who had been his partner for quarter of a century caused him no undue sorrow. He looked at the matter from a strictly utilitarian standpoint. Reinold had been very useful, indeed indispensable, but of late years his value had declined.

As a designer and strategist he was a genius, and the fertility of his amazing brain had evolved a continuous stream of successful plans and schemes of real, though perverted, artistic beauty. Like all true artists, he hated to repeat himself. Consequently the firm of Reinold's were the possessors of many invaluable methods and devices which still preserved their freshness and originality.

Now that their creator was dead these methods still remained, and Mr. Harrison realized with satisfaction that they had many years of useful life before them. After all, he thought, hoary old swindles like the three card trick, the Spanish prisoner and the confidence trick, were never failing

goldmines to those who worked them. It matters not how often they are exposed, it matters not how vast the circulation of the newspapers which render this service to the public, there is always a plentiful supply of get-rich-quick mugs to fall for them. How much more valuable, then, was Reinold's legacy of new and almost unused money-making schemes. It was really absurd that he had insisted on such frequent changes. There was no need for them from the commercial point of view; it was merely the creative artist in Reinold which was obstinate. It was just as though a theatre proprietor who wrote his own plays insisted on taking off successful pieces during profitable runs just for the pleasurable but expensive excitement of rehearsals for something new.

Mr. Harrison was also the possessor of a first-class brain, even if it was not up to the exceptional standard of his partner's. He had, however, less of the artist in him, and he resolved that in future methods which had been "tried out" profitably could continue to be used so long as they fulfilled two essential conditions which he laid down; that is to say, so long as they remained profitable and so long as they were safe.

This meant that the firm could get along very well without the senior partner. It also meant a vastly increased income for Mr. Wayland Harri-

son. Taking things all round therefore, that gentleman was well satisfied when the scythe of the Great Reaper dissolved the partnership with such dramatic suddenness and finality. The only question was—who was the murderer?

Mr. Harrison lit his pipe and settled down in his revolving chair to think over this problem with the concentration which it demanded. He saw at once that it concerned himself very directly, in spite of the fact that he rather approved of Reinold's murder, and for a very sound reason—*he himself might be the next one on the list!*

Whoever the murderer was, and whatever his grievance, it probably concerned the firm and not Reinold as an individual. Apart from his business activities the deceased partner was a most inoffensive little man, unlikely to have any personal enemies in private life.

Another disquieting thought—the murderer was almost certainly some one in the employ of the firm. It was obvious that he was interested in the contents of the deed-box. Now this contained—or rather had contained—papers referring both to employés and to outsiders, but only the former would know even approximately where the incriminating documents were stored.

This was serious. Revolt against established authority is always serious, especially when that

authority has alienated all sympathy and support by arbitrary and arrogant tyranny, and especially when the rebel, himself unknown, has ample opportunity for access to the tyrant.

Wayland Harrison frowned, and when he frowned his face was not pleasant to look upon. Whatever his faults he was a strong man, a formidable opponent and a relentless enemy, and he prepared to tackle this problem with every ounce of his superabundant energy. For his own safety there was no time to be lost.

Harrison had put on flesh since his retirement from the private inquiry agency. He had the thick neck and the mottled face of a heavy drinker, which was misleading, for he was an abstemious man. His life was a ceaseless struggle to keep his weight within reasonable bounds, for he was one of those unfortunates whose girth increases in spite of dieting and hard work. The claims of business limited his outdoor exercise to week-ends. In former years he was a footballer of some repute, until the middle thirties compelled his retirement. He then took up golf, years too late to become a good player. It was a tribute to his keenness and perseverance that he contrived to get his handicap down into single figures, for his style was radically faulty. When Harrison wanted a thing—and he was a complete and whole-souled egoist who wanted many things—

he usually got it. The methods by which he attained his objective were quite unimportant, in his opinion.

It was commonly believed at the golf club that he was a man who wanted watching during a medal competition. Rumour had it that he was not above grounding his club in a bunker or pressing his brassy firmly on the fairway behind the ball in order to improve the lie. There are many such players, who sin against the Laws of St. Andrews either through knavery or ignorance.

But in all things connected with the foundry business Harrison was absolutely straight. He agreed whole-heartedly with his late partner that the best safeguard for Reinold's hidden activities was a faultless reputation in their legitimate trade. Consequently all bills were settled promptly, contracts were fulfilled to the very letter and goods supplied were always up to sample in quality. Customers of the firm could rarely complain of their treatment, and, if they did, great care was taken to send them away satisfied.

This straightness and fair dealing were foreign to Harrison's nature, and merely assumed for a purpose. In his capacity as director of Reinold's secondary business he would resort to any means to carry out his designs, so long as they were not dangerous to himself.

The verdict of the coroner's jury was "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown." Wayland Harrison gave a mirthless chuckle which boded ill for the persons unknown. Unlike the police he did not need to know; only let him suspect and he would see that the danger which threatened him was removed, if it meant wrecking half the firm to do it.

First, then, the murderer was probably some victim of blackmail. No one else would be likely to take the trouble to destroy the contents of the deed-box. Secondly, it was almost certainly a member of the firm—what the police call "an inside job." So far so good. That reduced the number of possibles to about thirteen. Thirdly, such poor specimens as Ginger Brown could be excluded. Reinold's gave this type of man better wages than they could obtain elsewhere; they were wholly without ambition and their bonds were likely to chafe them little, if at all. Besides, they would not know where to find the evidence.

The fact that the murderer did know pointed directly to the office staff, which again reduced the list of probables to five. Three of these Mr. Harrison crossed off at once, for the same reasons that held good in the case of Ginger Brown, namely, lack of ambition and intelligence, and in one case, a girl typist, lack of the necessary physical strength. The

process of separating the sheep from the goats had now eliminated all but two—Mr. Edgar Marston, the manager, and Theodore Harding, the chief clerk and cashier. Mr. Harrison knew that both of them were able men with earning capacities in private life at least as great as at Reinold's—probably greater. He knew also that they stayed with the firm, not because they wanted to, but because they were not allowed to leave.

Of the two—which was it? Mr. Harrison did not hesitate a moment in making his choice. Harding, the ex-forger and chief clerk, was an expert penman, but his frail build and rather timorous character were not adapted to the use of heavier weapons. By no stretch of his very adequate imagination could Wayland Harrison visualize the mild and spectacled Harding in the rôle of assassin. To think of him smashing a poker down on to an unprotected skull was as absurd and improbable as to imagine an orthodox Hindu employed in a Chicago slaughter-house. Whereas Marston, with his fourteen stone of bone and muscle, his irascible temper, and his past record of violence, filled the bill to perfection.

This was all conjectural, and there was not a scrap of real evidence, but Harrison was not in a mood to wait for evidence at such a crisis. For a long time he had not liked Marston's demeanour.

There had been really nothing definite to take exception to, but the manager had been somewhat sulky, and his manner conveyed a hint of veiled insubordination. Wayland Harrison leaned forward and pressed the bell push on his desk.

"Ask Mr. Marston to step this way if he can spare the time, please, Miss Morgan," he said to the answering typist.

Miss Morgan, in addition to being a stenographer, was a most efficient lady's maid, and was frequently absent from the office for several months at a time. On these occasions she obtained situations with the aid of glowing testimonials provided by the useful and polymorphous pen of Mr. Harding. The neatly engraved addresses at the head of these testimonials varied, but the telephone number was always the same, which was convenient, for it enabled Mr. Harding to confirm their authenticity when an unusually astute prospective mistress entertained unworthy suspicions. Miss Morgan never stayed very long in one situation; two months was ample time to get a complete plan of her employer's house, to take wax impressions of the door keys, to make full notes of the habits of the occupants and an inventory of all portable property of value. Her part of the work being then finished, she returned to her typewriter. The wax impressions were handed over to the foreman mechanic for the filing

of the necessary keys, and these, together with the plans and other information, were at the disposal of Reinold and Harrison, who planned the work. The men who actually carried it out were thus provided with equipment which saved them much valuable time and trouble, and which incidentally lessened the risk very considerably.

In a few minutes Marston entered the room.

"Sit down, Mr. Marston," began Harrison. He never omitted the Mister, even when they were alone together. "That deed-box was a big loss to the firm," he continued.

"Well, I don't know," replied Marston. "It had some valuable stuff in it, but you probably won't be any worse off."

"Won't be any worse off?" echoed Harrison in amazement. "Why, do you know how much the contents of that box represented in hard cash?"

"No, I don't."

"About seven hundred a year. Do you think I can drop that amount without noticing it?"

"No, sir, I didn't mean that. But the value of those papers"—blackmail was a word tacitly avoided at Reinold's—"remains unchanged so long as the people concerned don't know that they are destroyed."

Harrison looked up sharply and regarded Marston with renewed interest. He had not thought of

that, but it was perfectly true. Once blackmail has been started it can be carried on very successfully by bluff alone. Rarely has the victim sufficient courage to call the bluff.

"If they think Reinold's hold the evidence," went on Marston, "then for practical purposes we do hold it, even though it has been destroyed."

Fifteen years of blackmail in his own person had taught Marston all there was to be known about it. This hard-won knowledge was now being put to good use, and he was feeling very pleased with himself. By stressing the importance of concealing the loss he was feathering his own nest for the future, and at the same time impressing upon Harrison his disinterested keenness for the welfare of the firm.

Harrison was silent for a moment. He also was thinking hard. Marston seemed to be assuming that the secret would not leak out. Why was he so sure about it? Did he really know anything about the murder? The best plan was to go on talking about it and hope that something would come to light.

"Have the police found anything fresh?" Harrison knew that they had not, but wanted to avoid gaps in the conversation.

"No, sir."

"Are you quite certain that the office is all right?"

"Absolutely, sir." By this Marston meant that the police search would reveal nothing except books and papers relating to the genuine foundry business.

"Did the inspector tell you anything? He was as close as an oyster when I saw him."

"He told me his theory of how it was done, sir, but said that it was only guesswork."

"Well, how was it done?"

"He thinks the murderer rushed Mr. Reinold, who fired at him and missed, and the man got in his blow with the poker before he could fire a second time."

"That's all very well, but Mr. Reinold was far too good a shot to miss at pointblank range. With that automatic of his he could put seven shots into a six-inch circle at ten yards every time. I've seen him do it. And the range couldn't have been more than three yards at the outside."

"Perhaps the man struck him down from behind, sir," put in Marston, who had no particular desire to elucidate matters. He knew exactly what had happened—none better—but if Inspector Ridley reconstructed the crime wrongly he was certainly not going to correct him.

"He couldn't do that. There isn't room," mused

Harrison. This was perfectly correct. Reinold's desk and chair were placed in an alcove, so that it was impossible to approach them from behind. The cautious mind of Reinold could always be trusted to think of such details.

"No," went on the junior partner, "the attack must have been from the front. And at the inquest ——"

He stopped suddenly and pulled out his cigarette-case. There was a pause.

"You were saying, sir?" queried Marston.

"I don't know what I was saying. I've forgotten. It can't have been anything important, anyhow." Wayland Harrison's heavy face was quite impassive and showed nothing of his feelings as he uttered this lie. The sentence which he had cut short was of very vital importance, and he had only stopped it just in time. He had been thinking of the medical evidence at the inquest, of the doctor's statement that the right side of the skull was shattered to pieces by the violence of the blow. If this could only have been delivered from in front it meant that the murderer was left-handed. Harrison thoughtfully extracted a cigarette and held out the case.

"Have one?" he said. "Turks on this side, virgins on the other. Matches on the desk."

Having eyes we see not. How many people know

the number of steps up to their bedrooms? Not one in a hundred, though they use the staircase every day for half a century. Harrison had been in close and daily contact with Marston for years, and he was an unusually observant man—yet he was not certain of one small fact which he must have seen thousands of times. Suspicion lurked at the back of his mind, and yet he was not sure until he put the matter to the test. He dropped his eyelids and watched carefully as he held out the silver case. Marston took a cigarette, tapped it on the desk, lighted it and threw the match into the fireplace—all with his left hand.

After a little more desultory conversation the interview closed and the manager left the office.

"Good morning, sir," he said as he opened the door.

"Good morning, Mr. Marston," returned Harrison, true to the deep-rooted Reinold tradition of surface urbanity.

The door shut and the masks were off.

"That settles it," thought Wayland Harrison. "Exit Mr. Marston."

"Your last chance gone," thought Marston as he returned to his own room. "The offer of a partnership might have saved you—for a time. As it is, look out for yourself, Mr. Wayland Harrison; I've been kept down long enough."

Marston sat down at his desk and began to turn over the leaves of a bank pass book. Columns of figures, mere columns of figures, deadly dull and uninteresting, and yet they are responsible for more crime and tragedy than all the oratory and literature of the world.

Marston was a man of expensive tastes and lived fully up to his income, as his bank book showed. Recently he had taken up yet another costly pursuit, which depleted still further his already scanty balance. He was always a keen fisherman, and for years had spent considerable amounts on his hobby, but since the introduction of tunny fishing in the North Sea he had lost his enthusiasm for all other forms of angling. The thrills and excitements of this wonderful big game sport threw into the shade all lesser fish, and once Marston had tasted its joys and felt the mad rush of a six hundred pounder his one object in life was to repeat the experience as often as possible. He did so, but a short week-end with one day's fishing costs ten to fifteen pounds, and his income could not stand the extra strain. He solved the problem by the simple method of transferring money from the firm's account to his own. Needless to say he did not touch the funds of the foundry, which were hedged about by bookkeepers and guarded by accountants and auditors. He confined his raids exclusively to the cash brought in by

the secondary business, which was almost entirely under his control and subject only to occasional supervision by Harrison. The latter was not an expert bookkeeper, and Marston hoped and believed that the leakages would never be discovered.

Still, there was no certainty about it, and this very suspense and insecurity was another reason why Marston was so anxious to get the control of the business into his own hands. The books showed, to the discerning eye, that five hundred pounds had been abstracted during the last four months. It was too much. Harrison had already grumbled about the low takings of the last quarter, and if it went on an investigation was highly probable. Harrison himself could never detect the fraudulent entries; for obvious reasons an auditor was out of the question; but—and this was a contingency which Marston had not thought of before—Harding might be brought in to go through his books, and Harding was good at accountancy.

CHAPTER V

MR. MARSTON'S ALIBI

"Yes," said Ridley, "we're properly up against it this time. Whoever did this job knew what he was doing."

Drury made no reply. He agreed with his companion, but knew him well enough to avail himself of the privilege of silence when words were of no avail.

Detective Inspector Dennis Drury of the Criminal Investigation Department had been sent to Southbourne at the urgent request of the local police. A young detective sergeant, Leverton by name, came with him as his assistant. Major Sullivan's first message mentioned two murders, so another inspector began the journey with them. As soon as Dr. Hemsworth's innocence was established, however, a hasty telephone call was put through, and the second inspector was recalled to Scotland Yard about five minutes before the Southbourne train left King's Cross.

Drury and Ridley, who had not met since the solution of the Levinsky mystery, had a hurried

meal and then plunged straight into their work. Drury was shown round Reinold's offices, and spent several hours there, mostly in the room where the body had been found, which had been kept locked since the tragedy occurred.

During his preliminary examination the previous evening Ridley had devoted himself mainly to securing a comprehensive series of flashlight photographs, taken from every conceivable angle. For this purpose he had pressed into service one of Southbourne's many photographers, whose normal occupation was the supply of postcard groups to trippers on the beach. Sometimes, by way of variety, he took wedding photos and flashlight pictures of dinners, but never before had he been asked to exercise his art upon a corpse. He was quite upset about it, and required a good deal of persuasion before he would undertake the job.

Ridley had also nearly completed an elaborate plan of the office, drawn to scale, on which was marked the exact position of the body and of every article of furniture. The photographs and plan would always be useful and would have to be obtained sooner or later, so he thought that his time could not be better occupied. Wisely, he left everything untouched as far as possible, pending the arrival of the Scotland Yard man, whose experience in such cases was necessarily far greater than his own.

The body was lying on the floor in front of a desk situated in a large recess in the wall. A revolving chair was close behind. About four or five feet away was an armchair, facing it. On the desk itself, about eighteen inches above the head of the corpse, was a large bloodstain.

"Looks as though he was hit when he was sitting in this chair," commented Drury, pointing to the one near the desk, "and fell with his head on there."

The inspector bent down to examine the body. The left hand was lying, palm upwards, on the carpet. Caught in the neat gold buckle of the wrist-watch strap was a tuft of very fine, short brown hair. Drury carefully removed this and put it in an envelope which he borrowed from the desk. Meanwhile Sergeant Leverton, by his instructions, was going round the room with a powder blower, endeavouring to find traces of finger-prints.

He tested door-knobs, telephone receivers, electric light switches, a silver cigarette-box, the dead man's wrist watch, the poker which lay on the floor near the body and many other promising objects, but with no result.

"He's cleaned up after it very carefully, sir," grumbled the sergeant, when he reported his failure to Drury.

"Never mind, Leverton. If he's been thinking

about finger-prints so hard he's sure to have overlooked something else."

The inspector had just finished his scrutiny of Mr. Reinold's body.

"Have you got a stretcher here, Ridley?"

"Yes. Outside."

"We might get it in now, I think, unless there's anything further you want to look at before we move him."

Ridley went to the door and beckoned to the officer in the passage. Five minutes later the tramp of constabulary boots died away down the stairs as a sheet-covered stretcher was carried to the ambulance.

The stains on the desk and carpet were covered up and, at Drury's suggestion, Harrison and Marston were admitted. In answer to their eager questions Drury frankly confessed that he could not at present see a single ray of light. The murderer, he explained, had done his work with exceptional self-effacement.

"That must make things very difficult," observed Mr. Marston sorrowfully.

"Can either of you make any suggestions as regards motive?" inquired Drury.

Both men shook their heads.

"He had no enemies, as far as you know?"

"No," replied Wayland Harrison. "No more

than any other ordinary business man. Rivals, perhaps; but enemies, no."

"He always got on very well with his employés," put in Marston. "I don't know much about his private life."

"Very quiet indeed," said Harrison. "He knew very few people outside the business. He kept to himself, and hardly ever went out or entertained."

"Do you happen to know what was in this box?" asked the inspector, pointing to an empty, black tin deed-box which lay open on the desk.

"I don't," replied Marston.

"Yes, I can tell you," Harrison said. "Papers of various kinds belonging to Mr. Reinold. Insurance policies and that sort of thing. He never kept money in it."

"Was there likely to be anything worth stealing in it—anything that could be converted into money?"

"No, I'm sure there wasn't."

"Then I wonder why it's empty. Would you two gentlemen have a look round and see if you can find the papers which ought to be in that box, and also see if anything has been stolen?"

Harrison and the manager began their search, the former starting with the safe, and the latter with the desk. Drury left them to it and went on with his own explorations.

Ten minutes afterwards Marston reported that nothing appeared to be missing from the desk. Harrison took longer over the safe, not because he was really checking its contents, but because he was thinking hard. As the safe was devoted exclusively to the secret business of the firm, his search was merely a matter of form. If anything had been missing he could not have admitted it.

He was in a very bad temper. Since his partner's death he had been going through the private accounts, and had discovered that the receipts were disappointingly low. He was not absolutely certain of his figures, for bookkeeping was not his strong point, but he was convinced that there was a leak somewhere. The volume of "invisible" business done by the firm had, if anything, increased, and yet the profits were less. He'd have to get Harding to go through the books with him and get to the bottom of the mystery. But suppose Harding was the thief or the confederate of the thief? It must be either Harding or Marston. No one else could do it. For a moment Harrison thought regretfully of Reinold. He would have found the leak at once. It was a pity Reinold ever handed over the control to Marston. Harrison closed the door of the safe and locked it.

"Anything missing?" asked Drury.

"No," said Harrison, his face as black as thunder. He made an effort and forced himself to speak naturally. "Everything seems to be all right, thanks."

It was galling to have to say it, to know that he had been robbed but could not complain about it.

Drury, of course, knew nothing of these wheels within wheels, and placidly continued his work. Just to the right of the mantelpiece, an inch or two away from a copper ash-tray which overhung one corner of it, was a ragged tear in the wall-paper, through which the dull red brick of the partition wall could be seen. The little pile of plaster dust on the linoleum beneath looked quite fresh and clean. A few seconds' search discovered a flattened bullet in it.

"Next thing is to find the cartridge-case," said Drury. He looked at the revolving chair as he spoke, and ran his eye from it to the bullet hole. "Let's see. He fired from there across to the mantelpiece. Automatics throw out their cartridges on the right side, so it should be somewhere over here."

He walked across towards a solid looking chest of drawers which stood against the wall. There was no sign of the missing case on the floor, so he knelt down and looked under the cabinet. A glint of bright metal caught his eye. He thrust one arm underneath and groped vainly on the dusty linoleum.

"Can't quite reach it," he said, getting up and brushing fluff off the knees of his trousers. "Can we move this?"

"Not very well," replied Marston, stepping forward. "It's too heavy. Full of brass castings. Shall I try? I think I am longer in the arm than you."

He knelt down and slid his hand under the cabinet.

"I can just touch it, but I can't get hold of it. Let's try the other arm."

He moved round a little and tried the other arm. Either the position was more convenient or the arm was slightly thinner, for this time, with many grunts, he succeeded in getting hold of the little brass cylinder, which Drury put on the mantelpiece for the time being, together with the bullet.

The next thing to be examined were the doors and windows. The latter were large, low casements opening on to the fire-escape, from which an unlovely acreage of chimney pots and dust-bins could be seen. Drury opened one of them and stepped out.

"This doesn't seem to be used much," he said, for the iron steps and rails looked rusty and neglected.

"No, it isn't," replied Marston. "I've never been out there in my life, and very few other people

have. We had to put it up because of the building by-laws, and Mr. Reinold was very annoyed about it. He would never spend any money on painting it, because he always said it was unnecessary as we had another one."

Drury went down a few steps, and soon saw that the emergency stairs served Reinold's private offices only. The rooms below did not open on to it—presumably they were safeguarded by the other fire-escape. He went down still further until he reached the first landing. Here he noticed that he was out of sight of the office window because of the overhanging platform above. Something caught his eye, and he bent down and picked it up. It was merely a little triangular piece of rubber, part of a boot sole, which was caught in one of the holes of the perforated iron plates on which he was standing. It was such a very ordinary object that he might easily have passed it by as of no importance if, three minutes before, he had not happened to catch sight of Mr. Marston's upturned boots while the latter was kneeling on the floor to retrieve the cartridge-case.

He had noticed that the manager was wearing rubber soles. They were thin and almost worn out, and a piece was missing. This casual subconscious observation, of apparently no moment whatever, and in the ordinary course of events destined to be

forgotten in a few minutes, was brought back into his mind with a jerk. He slipped the bit of rubber into his pocket and climbed back up the stairs into the office.

"Sorry to trouble you, Mr. Marston," he said; "but would you mind showing me the exact place where you found the cartridge-case? You've no idea how particular our people are about such things."

The manager at once got down on to the floor again, and Drury followed suit, being careful to see that he was between the manager and Mr. Harrison, who was talking to Ridley at the other end of the room.

"It was just about here—no, a bit further along. Ah, that's the place, just to the left of the joint in the oilcloth. Can you see?"

"Yes, perfectly well, thanks," replied Drury, who did not want to see and was not even looking. The two men got up, and Drury suppressed his excitement. The piece of rubber in his hand fitted the gap torn in the manager's boot sole; of that he was certain, although he had only had a couple of seconds to compare the two.

There is nothing inherently suspicious in rubber soles—thousands of people prefer them to leather for economic or other reasons. Drury wore them himself. There is nothing peculiar in losing a piece

of a worn sole on one of the punched out iron steps of an emergency staircase. But, and here lay the significance of Drury's discovery, why had Marston just said that he never used the fire-escape, when he had obviously used it quite recently to judge by the freshly broken edges of the rubber?

In the meantime Wayland Harrison had excused himself to Ridley and gone back to his own room to attend to some arrears of correspondence. Office routine had been very upset during the last twenty-four hours, he explained, and work had got behindhand. He didn't want to appear callous or anything of that sort, and if he could be of any use he would be only too glad to stay, but Mr. Marston would be there to show them anything they wanted and to answer any questions. He himself felt it a duty to his late partner's memory not to let the firm suffer loss. He was sure Mr. Reinold, who was always a keen business man, would have approved of this attitude. In any event he would be in his private room if wanted. With that he departed.

"Who was the last person to see Mr. Reinold alive, Mr. Marston?" asked Drury at length, taking a short rest from his search and filling his pipe.

"I—er—I suppose I was. What time did he die, by the way? Do you know exactly?"

"About half-past seven," replied Ridley. "At

least we got the phone message then and found him dead a few minutes afterwards."

"I saw him for the last time at half-past five. That's only approximate, of course. I can't tell you to a minute or two. All the rest of the staff had gone then, and he told me he was staying late and would lock up when he went. I left soon after half-past, so I suppose he would be alone until—until——" Mr. Marston was unable to complete his sentence. "Sorry, gentlemen," he said, "but Mr. Reinold was my boss for years."

Even the martinet, Reinold, himself would have approved of that artistic lapse from conventional terms of respect. What more natural than a man deeply moved by sorrow and regret to refer to his late employer by that friendly and sympathetic title?

At that moment Drury looked very unofficial. He had his coat off, for the office was very warm; his pipe was lit and he lounged comfortably upon the arm of a big leather chair. He knew nothing of the learned language of psychology, but he knew how to avoid frightening people from whom he wished to extract information.

"Well," he began, "if you were the last, I shall have to ask you a few questions about your movements that night. We always have to do it, you know," he added apologetically.

Surreptitiously he winked at Ridley, who was

looking rather mystified at this unnecessary display of informality and conciliation. There had been no opportunity to enlighten him about the piece of rubber.

Marston looked confused.

"Gee!" he said ruefully, "I didn't want to rake that silly business up. Still I suppose I shall have to. You're not suspecting me of murdering him, are you?"

Drury laughed. "We question lots of people whom we don't suspect, Mr. Marston. When there aren't any clues you've got to start somewhere. We shall have to question everybody who had any dealings with Mr. Reinold, and the more people who can prove they were somewhere else when he was murdered the less work there is left for us to do, and the better we shall be pleased. You're the first one on the list, which means that we are not bothering about you much, except as a matter of form. We always keep the best till the last, you know."

Ridley was astounded. There wasn't any evidence against anyone, least of all Marston, so why go to all this trouble to reassure him?

"Now, Mr. Marston," went on Drury, looking as unlike a police officer as it was possible for anyone to look, "if you can answer me one question we won't bother you any more, but will get on with somebody else. There's always a lot of wasted

work in our job." Drury stifled a yawn, as if bored with the whole affair.

"Well, what is the question?"

"Where were you at 7:30 last night?"

"Locked up in the cells in your beastly police station," was the devastating reply.

CHAPTER VI

QUESTIONS

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Ridley. "Then you were the chap ——"

"I was," laughed Marston.

"But I thought—er—Purley told me he was a Dr. Hemsworth."

"Quite right. I am Dr. Hemsworth."

"Look here," interposed Drury, "I hate butting in, but would you mind telling me what all this is about?"

In a few sentences Ridley told him the story of the mare's nest discovered by Sam Garside.

"Anyway, you can't beat it for a watertight alibi, that's one consolation, Mr. Marston. Or perhaps I ought to call you Dr. Hemsworth?" Drury seemed perplexed by the manager's multiplicity of names.

"No. I am always known as Marston here. I'd better tell you all about it now that the cat's out of the bag. I am a doctor, and you'll find my name on the Medical Register as Hemsworth, which is my real name. I've been a clinical assistant at St. John's Hospital ——"

"That's about ten miles from here," put in Ridley for Drury's benefit.

"For the last five years. Of course that's only a part-time job, two three-hour sessions a week in the out-patient department. I like hospital work, but I hate general practice. I had quite enough of it when I'd done a few months as an assistant. Too hard work. Couldn't stick it at any price. It's such a wasteful job. You spend so much time on the road visiting people that you haven't any left to do the work in when you get there. And patients are such inconsiderate fools. Those who are really ill are all right, of course. They are patience itself, but I could never get on with those neurotic idiots who are always terribly ill and never have anything to show for it. They always try to impress their doctor with long strings of symptoms and complaints, but I can tell you it doesn't cut much ice when he's used to seeing people dying of cancer without a murmur. And then I couldn't stand working seven days a week all the year round. It used to make me laugh when patients complained of overwork and I found out that they were doing about half as much as myself! People actually used to think they were hardly used when they worked five and a half days a week and had all their evenings and week-ends off. Why, when I was in practice we should have called that a part-time job.

They'd no night work, either, or, if they had, they didn't work in the daytime.

"But I had to earn my living, and I was at my wits' end how to do it without going into practice, so when Reinold's offered me a good job I took it, on condition that I could keep on with my hospital work, which I liked too well to give up. I knew Mr. Reinold pretty well, and he let me do this—he adjusted my salary accordingly, of course. He wasn't a man to give anything away—and I've kept it up ever since. It's quite different in hospital. The patients are brought to you instead of you having to go to them, and so you have time to do the work properly. That makes it interesting. Besides, you're working under decent conditions and you needn't bother about bad debts and things.

"Of course I wasn't manager of Reinold's when I started, but I was told that I should be promoted if I gave satisfaction, so I took it on and learnt the business pretty quickly. I use the name of Marston, which is really my own second name, for business purposes, because it sounds rather unprofessional for a doctor to be working in a brass foundry. Not that it matters really, but the hospital authorities probably wouldn't like it. Queer, mixed sort of life, perhaps, but it suited me very well and it was no concern of anybody else's."

"Quite so," observed Drury, who was rather

tired of this long explanation. "It's a free country. Didn't you recognize him though, Ridley?"

"No. I never saw him at the station. I was busy over here all the time. Purley took him in charge and found out the whole story and the Chief Constable did the rest. So don't blame me for your stay in the cells, doctor. Still, if you will leave odd legs lying about you mustn't be surprised if there are misunderstandings."

"I'm not complaining," smiled Marston. "I'll give you a testimonial for your hotel any time you want one. It has at least made it easy for me to explain where I was at half-past seven. Now if it had been half-past six you wanted to know about it would be very awkward. I was in a tramcar full of strangers, and might have been committing half a dozen murders for all I could prove to the contrary."

During this conversation Drury wrote a few lines on a page of his notebook and passed it over to Ridley.

"Phone to Purley and get him to come over here and see if this really is the man he arrested. Don't let Marston know," ran the message.

Ridley was a dependable man and quick in the uptake, so Drury felt sure that his instructions would be carried out without delay and without

embarrassing questions. His confidence was justified. Ridley read the message and passed the notebook back.

"Yes," he said. "That plan's too rough for accurate measurements. I'll get the proper one for you. May I use your phone, Dr. Hemsworth?"

"Certainly."

Ridley rang up the station and ordered Purley to bring round the scale plan of the office which had been drawn during the morning.

A few minutes later the detective officer appeared with a large roll of paper under his arm. He grinned somewhat sheepishly at Marston as he put it down on the table.

"Good afternoon, doctor," he said.

"Good afternoon," replied Marston. "We have met before, I think?"

Not a bad chap, this, thought Purley. It isn't everybody who would take it in such a sporting spirit.

Drury unrolled the office plan and marked in carefully with red ink dots the bullet hole near the mantelpiece and the place where the cartridge-case was found.

"I think we can lock up here and go back to the station for the time being," he said. "Sorry we've kept you so long, Dr. Hemsworth. We'll interview

the rest of your people later, and if they can all state their whereabouts as convincingly as you did it won't take long."

Drury stuck the rolled-up plan under his arm, collected the bullet and cartridge-case from the mantelpiece and went to the door.

"Nothing you want out of here before we lock up, doctor?"

"No, thanks."

Ridley locked the door, pocketed the key and followed Drury downstairs. As soon as they were well clear of the building the latter told the local inspector of his boot-sole discovery, whereby much that was obscure was made clear to him.

"I wonder why he said he never used the fire-escape," mused Ridley thoughtfully. "It's a jolly good thing for him that he has such a rattling good alibi, or things would look pretty black, with his two names and his bits of boot sole left in a place where he'd never been."

"Yes, very lucky," agreed Drury. "Sounds almost too good to be true."

"Purley recognized him all right at any rate. You're quite certain it's the same man, aren't you?" This to Purley, who was walking in silence listening to his superiors' words of wisdom.

"Absolutely, sir."

"There you are, then. He's only one man even

if he has got two names, and one man can't very well be in two places at once."

"Quite. To-day's great thought. But I was wondering if his alibi was as fool-proof as it seems to be."

"Yes, I'm sure it is. Nothing wrong anywhere, Purley, was there?"

"No, sir. When I got him back to the charge room you'd already gone to Reinold's. Besides, every bit of his story was backed up by other people."

Drury was silent for a while.

"It's all very complicated," he said at last. "We shall have to get it down on paper and make out a time-table and see if everything fits in properly."

Drury was a great believer in time-tables and in making notes of all questions and queries which occurred to him during the progress of his work. He firmly believed that criminals' precautions to cover up their tracks nearly always failed to bear close examination.

"If you are faking things to throw people off the scent," he used to say, "it is almost impossible to do it perfectly. There is generally some discrepancy between a faked series of events and the same series proceeding naturally."

The soundness of this argument had been proved

many times, notably in the case of the disappearance of Mr. Levinsky,* when Mrs. Laidlaw rashly wrote a reply to a letter which had not had time to be delivered, and Dr. Laidlaw over-reached himself in his ingenious and apparently frank confession of half the truth in order to conceal the other half.

When he got back to the police station Drury at once began to compile his questionnaire and time-table. For an hour or more he dug happily in bundles of official reports connected with the case, his beloved facts and figures soothing and reassuring him after a morning's uncertainty. Times and time-tables were as comforting to him as dry land to a shipwrecked sailor, and felt like solid rocks in a sea of doubts. Finally he completed his second sheet of notes and went in search of Ridley.

"See if you can produce any bright thoughts or pick any holes in this," he demanded. "I haven't got it very clear yet, but it seems decidedly suggestive."

"Fire away," grunted Ridley.

"Questions first," began Drury. "Why did Marston, as Marston, lie about the fire-escape?"

"Don't know," responded Ridley. "You've asked me that one before. Why did he?"

"I'm not certain yet. The importance of it at this stage is that it brings him right into the picture

*See "The Man Who Was Dead."

and makes him and his doings part of the time-table. And, as Marston and Hemsworth are one and the same, it brings Hemsworth and his doings into it as well. If only he'd kept his mouth shut about it I should have washed him out of the case straight away, as you did, because of his magnificent alibi."

"Then there wouldn't have been much time-table left," observed Ridley. "Only one entry—time of murder, 7:30."

"Second question," went on Drury, quite unperturbed, "why did Marston, as Hemsworth, forget for ten days the leg which he wanted so particularly for his experiments?"

"Perhaps he had to go away suddenly," suggested Ridley.

"Perhaps. Sounds reasonable, especially as he left the leg at the station. We'll have to find out about that." Drury made a note to this effect. "Third question, who rang up the police?"

"That's been bothering me ever since it happened," was the reply. "The exchange told us that the call came from Reinold's office, but naturally they couldn't tell us any more. It must have been some one who happened to call after the murder. Mr. Harrison can't suggest any likely person, though."

"And the somebody, whoever he was, was public spirited enough to ring you up and then so scared

that he hopped it without waiting for you to arrive. Doesn't sound right, somehow. If the caller had been really scared at the sight of the body, either because it was a body or because he thought he might get into trouble over it, he wouldn't have rung up at all. He'd have cleared out straight away and kept his mouth shut. If he had the sense to telephone he'd have had the sense to stay there till you came. He'd realize that it would look bad if he tried to sneak out and was caught."

"Well, then, if it wasn't a passer-by, who was it? Telephones don't carry on conversations by themselves."

"There's only one other person it could have been—the murderer himself!"

CHAPTER VII

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE CRIME

RIDLEY jumped when he heard this startling suggestion.

"The murderer! Talk sense. Have you ever heard of a murderer notifying the police?"

"No, I haven't, except in cases where he wanted to give himself up. But we're not talking about precedents. We're going over the possibilities—the things that might have happened, however improbable they are."

"All right. Then why should your murderer do such a damn silly trick instead of going while the going was good?"

"Perhaps he was mad. There doesn't seem to be any motive for the murder, anyhow, which rather fits in with insanity."

"Yes, that's a possibility." Ridley looked more serious as he saw that his colleague's outrageous arguments were apparently leading to a reasonable conclusion.

"I've got a much better idea than that, though," went on Drury.

"Spit it out, bo," drawled Ridley, in what he imagined to be an American accent. "Brain, if any, working at high speed this afternoon, if I mistake not."

"Perhaps he was sane and"—Drury leaned forward impressively—"wanted to fix the time of the murder as part of his scheme for getting away."

"Don't see that. Why should he want to fix it?"

"Because he had his alibi cooked ready for use. If you are preparing an alibi beforehand it might be very useful to have the murder at a certain time, and to let people know that it did occur at that time."

"Yes," said Ridley eagerly, his imagination at last stirred by these exciting possibilities. "If the period covered by the alibi was very short, for example."

"I wasn't thinking of that. What do you mean?"

"Suppose it only holds good for quarter of an hour. It wouldn't be much use unless the murder was definitely known to be done during that time. Medical evidence isn't exact enough for that, so the murderer himself has to see to it."

"Good idea." Drury made a note of it. "That argument wouldn't apply to Marston, for he was in the cells for the best part of five hours. I was off on another tack just now which seemed to fit in beautifully, but it was all mixed up at the back of

my mind like a forgotten name that you're trying to remember. I could feel it was there and yet I couldn't get hold of it. I was hoping that talking it over would clear it up and bring it out, but it seems farther off than ever. Wait a minute; I can nearly see it again. It's all tangled up and I can't get it clear." Drury leaned his head on his hands in intense concentration, and the pipe clenched between his strong white teeth went out unnoticed and unheeded. This was unusual, for he hated a cold pipe. "Oh, if I could only work it out! I'm sure there's something in it. Let's have another look at the time-table."

He drew the top sheet of his notes towards him and read it over aloud:

"'*Friday the 8th of August. Dr. Hemsworth deposited the suit-case in the cloak-room.*' I believe I've got it now. Suppose he did it intentionally, that his story about the injection experiments is merely a blind, that he had got hold of the leg for this very purpose ——"

"What purpose?"

"You'll see in a minute if this works out properly. It's getting clearer now. It's a lovely scheme if I can only follow it out and if it fits all the facts properly. Suppose he leaves the leg for a week or so to get well—ripened, shall we say? Sooner or later it's bound to be discovered, and you're certain

to put a man on to watch for the owner. He waits until this has happened, till the trap is all ready. That happens on *'Monday the 18th. At half-past one the leg was found by Sam Garside. At 3:30 Purley began his watch.'* Hemsworth knows this—has been looking out for it, in fact. He probably went to the station two or three times every day to spy out the land. It would be worth while inquiring if he was seen hanging about during that week. Next item on the list. *'Reinold last seen by Hemsworth at 5:30.'* I don't think that is particularly important. Anyhow, we've only got his word for it. *'At 7:30 by his own watch Reinold was murdered. At 7:30 the telephone message was received at the police station.'* This time is taken from the message book in the charge room. *'At 7:30 Dr. Hemsworth was arrested,'* according to Purley's report. This seems to be the point of contact between the two cases. Everything happens at once and gives the Southbourne Police and their revered inspector a hectic half-hour. Next item, *'7:35, body found by P.C. Roberts.'* That seems almost an anti-climax. Now the point is, why should all these things happen at the same time? It sounds rather more like design than accident, doesn't it? Now it seems to be getting clearer and working out beautifully. Where were we with the reconstruction of Hemsworth's movements? Oh, yes, I know.

He knows that Purley is waiting at the bookstall. About half-past seven he kills Reinold with the poker—why, we don't know—rings you up, clears off down the fire-escape, leaving a bit of rubber sole behind him in his hurry, dashes round to the cloak-room with his suit-case ticket and is promptly collared by Purley, which is exactly what he wants, what he has brought about by careful planning, what he needs to ensure his safety. The only point is—and the feasibility of this theory depends entirely upon it, how far is the station—railway station I mean, not the police station—from Reinold's offices?"

"About three-quarters of a mile," said Ridley, after a moment's reflection. "Nearly the whole length of George Street."

"Damn!" said Drury. "That spoils everything. Ten minutes' walk is too long. My idea won't work. We shall have to go back to the beginning again and think of something else. That's a pity, because it connected the two cases together nicely, and I don't see how we can do it any other way. And it's absolutely necessary to find some explanation which brings in both of them. They are too closely connected to be treated separately."

"Wait a minute," exclaimed Ridley. "It's three-quarters of a mile from Reinold's to the station if you go out of the front door and round by the main

street, but I was forgetting the fire-escape. If Marston did this he went down there and it brings you out into a side street about a hundred yards from the station."

"Hooray! It works then. His alibi isn't really an alibi at all, but only a first-rate imitation of one. He probably hoped that the confusion of two murders at once would mix things up so that they couldn't be sorted out, and, by Jove, he's about right too. How can we prove anything? We can't swear to the times accurately enough."

"It's a sound scheme," observed Ridley. "Nobody's going to suspect a person of murder if he's already in custody on another charge of murder."

"There's no proof, remember," Drury reminded him. "It's all guesswork, but it fits too neatly to be wrong."

"Gee, but it's complicated. What made you think of it?"

"Two small mistakes," replied Drury. "It was all perfect in other respects. Neither of them was of any importance without the other. It wouldn't have mattered about the bit of boot sole if he hadn't told that unnecessary lie about the fire-escape. After all, as a member of the firm, surely he could use the fire-escape any time he wanted. The lie about the fire-escape wouldn't have mattered either if he hadn't torn his boot, because we should never have

known it was a lie. But as soon as he gave himself away by both mistakes then he was the obvious person to go for. He evidently had something to conceal, and the almost impossible coincidence of two murder cases at once in a town like this, in both of which he was more or less mixed up, and one of which turned out to be a frost, made it very likely that the coincidence was arranged as part of his scheme for concealment. But I always say that they can't do it."

"Do what?"

"Arrange a preconceived scheme to look natural if you really begin to examine it."

"Yes, yes; I see," exclaimed Ridley hastily. He had heard Drury riding his hobby-horse before and did not want to hear it all over again. "I don't see what we can do about it, anyway."

"Nor do I. We can't swear to the exact minute at which he was arrested, and minutes are vitally important in this case. Unless Purley's watch and the charge room clock were synchronized from Greenwich that very afternoon no jury would look at such evidence. How long would it take him to get down the fire-escape to the cloak-room?"

"Not more than a minute and a half. Perhaps less. We shall have to try it and see, some time when Mr. Marston isn't there."

"There you are then. His position is practically

invulnerable even if our guesses are correct. Safe in the hands of the police—in the arms of his alibi, so to speak—within ninety seconds of leaving his victim. It doesn't leave us much margin."

"No, it doesn't. What can we do then?"

"Keep a careful eye on Mr. Marston or Dr. Hemsworth or whatever he calls himself, and hope that he will make another false step. If he is so anxious to cover up his tracks as to tell that quite unnecessary lie, he's sure to drop another brick sooner or later. There's just one other point about him which is important."

"You mean his left-handedness?"

"Oh, so you noticed it, then?"

"Yes, and I noticed another thing. He's trying to learn to do things with his right hand. Did you see him fill his pipe?"

"Yes. He fumbled about and dropped tobacco all over the floor, and then he broke three or four matches before he got one to light properly."

CHAPTER VIII

TICKET COLLECTORS AND RABBIT FUR

DETECTIVES in this country are hedged in and to some extent hampered by legal restrictions. They are subject to the law, like every one else, and cannot ride rough-shod over it. In point of fact they possess but few powers and privileges over and above those of the ordinary citizen, whose rights and liberties they must not infringe. Theoretically these limitations should make for inefficiency, and it is somewhat surprising that in practice they do not. Indeed it has been said that Scotland Yard treats its murderers very fairly and gently but nearly always hangs them, whereas certain foreign police forces bully and ill-treat their prisoners intolerably but generally fail to secure a conviction. Whether this is so or not, it is a fact that the detective in this country often has to ask as a favour that which his foreign colleague can demand as a right. This, at any rate, encourages courtesy and suavity.

When Drury next visited Reinold's offices he asked permission from Mr. Marston to interview the employés. The formality was more a matter of

habit than of necessity. He could, of course, have interviewed them in any case out of business hours. However, the manager was most helpful and gave his consent at once. He placed a room at the inspector's disposal and undertook to call up the members of the staff as and when required.

He also supplied him with a complete list of their names and addresses. There were forty-two of them. The inspector sat down at the desk and borrowed a sheet of paper out of the stationery rack. He wrote the figures one to forty-two down the left-hand edge of it, leaving one line for each person's answer to the all-important question.

This stage of the inquiry was easy enough. All he had to do was to find out where the employees were on the night of the murder, to take the names of any witnesses who could corroborate their stories and then go round and check them, with the aid of Sergeant Leverton. Essentially routine work, dull but very necessary. Drury took another sheet of paper out of the rack and began to rule it off in columns for names and addresses of witnesses. He always liked to do things tidily, that is, when he was not in a hurry. It took no longer to write answers neatly than to write them roughly and illegibly, and it saved work afterwards. Also, and this was more important, a neat statement often suggested valuable hints at the time, which rough notes

could not do. The door opened and Sergeant Leverton came in.

"Ready for the first one, sir?"

"Yes." Drury laid his newly ruled paper down on Mr. Harding's desk and arranged it carefully alongside his first sheet.

Leverton turned to go.

"Stop a minute. Come in and shut the door."

The sergeant obeyed.

"Have a look at these," went on Drury. "I've only just noticed them myself." He pointed to the borrowed notepaper. "Why should these sheets have different addresses on them?"

The sheets in question were good quality, tinted writing-paper, not at all like the usual commercial letter form. Moreover, the neatly embossed headings were, as Drury had said, different on each sheet. Neither of them referred in any way to Reinold's, but appeared to be residential addresses.

"Somebody keeps their own paper here, apparently," remarked Leverton. "Writes his private correspondence during office hours, I suppose. I don't see that it's anything to do with us, sir."

But this explanation did not satisfy Drury.

"Look at them again, sergeant," he said, "and then tell me why you're talking rubbish."

Leverton took up the sheets and examined them closely for some minutes.

"Don't see what you mean, sir."

"Use your eyes, man. Can't you see both the telephone numbers are the same? I wonder ——?"

Drury broke off and rummaged in the stationery rack once more.

"Here we are. Here's a sheet of the firm's paper. See? 'Reinold's Foundry, Westgate Road, Southbourne. Telephone, Southbourne 236.' Same number again. What does it mean?"

"I don't know, sir, but it sounds peculiar."

"Yes, we shall have to go into it. Keep quiet about it for the present." Drury pocketed specimens of Mr. Harding's stock in trade and turned to his list again. "Get hold of the first one now, Leverton. Bring 'em in here one by one and stop while I'm questioning them. It'll make it look more official."

The sergeant went out, and returned in a few seconds with Miss Morgan, the typist, who was placed first on Marston's list because she was the most accessible. She was a small, neat, efficient looking person with a carefully powdered face and a shining bronze permanent wave. As might be expected from her appearance she was extremely calm and self-possessed.

"Sit down, Miss Morgan," said Drury, who had given her one glance and then dropped his eyes to his list again. "I am going to ask you some questions, because we want you to help us to find out who killed Mr. Reinold. Everybody else is going through the same process, so you are not the only one. You needn't answer them unless you like, but I am sure you will give us all the help you can."

Miss Morgan raised her head and looked at Drury under her long lashes. Was there a faint shadow of relief in her expression?

"I'll do anything I can to help," she declared.

"Right. The first thing is, can you remember where you were on the evening of the 18th of August?"

"The 18th —— Oh, you mean the night of the murder?"

"Yes."

"I can," said Miss Morgan with emphasis. "And I'm not going to refuse to tell you either." She evidently saw the significance of the question. "I went to the pictures that night with George—he's my fiancé, you know—and his mother. She doesn't usually go with us," continued Miss Morgan, in a burst of confidence, "but it was her birthday. We got there about quarter to seven and came out when the big picture finished."

"What time was that?"

"About a quarter to nine."

"What was the name of the picture?"

"'The Opening of the Floodgates.'"

Drury made a note of this. The more details to check the better.

"Did anybody else see you there?"

"I don't think so. I don't remember seeing anybody I knew. Stop a minute, though. The programme girl might remember us. We go to the Rialto every week."

Drury took down the names of her companions and their address, and a description of the programme girl.

"How long have you been employed here?" was his next question.

"Three years," replied Miss Morgan.

"Is it your first situation?"

"Yes. I came here straight from school. I was only eighteen then."

"Do you like the work?"

"Fairish. I shouldn't like to do it all my life, but then I'm getting married soon. Mr. Marston's promised to find George a job here, and we shall get married as soon as he does."

"Right," said Drury. "I think that's all I wanted to ask you. You're sure the first half of your story is more reliable than the second? You wouldn't like to correct it in any way while you've got the chance? It's rather important, you know, and it might lead to nasty suspicions if we found it wasn't right."

Miss Morgan's jaw dropped and her face went pale beneath its powder.

"It's absolutely true, Mr. Drury," she gasped. "I swear it is. I wasn't anywhere near the office that night. I knew nothing about the murder till the next morning."

Every vestige of colour had left the typist's face, except for the vivid contrasting carmine of her lips. The make-up gave her a ghastly appearance, and she fell back in her chair, limp and faint with terror.

"All right, Annie, we can soon check it and see. But don't think you can get away with yarns about being twenty-one just because you've changed the colour of your hair. You were twenty-two when I last saw you in London seven years ago."

"Sorry, Mr. Drury; I didn't think you'd recognized me. I'm going straight now, though. Don't lose me my job."

She got up and went out, her air of self-possession shattered to fragments.

"What on earth ——?" began Leverton.

"That's Annie Donnelly. She used to work with an East End gang. Before your time, I think. I spotted her as soon as she came in, but didn't give the show away till she started to tell fairy tales."

One of the advantages which the detective of real life possesses as compared with the wonderful single-handed amateur of fiction is that in many cases

he has not to rely on deductions as to the character of the people he meets. His circle of criminal acquaintances is large, and it is much easier and far more satisfactory to recognize an ex-thief than to deduce his former life from his cigarette-ash or the lining of his hat.

So true is this principle that the knowledge of crooks and their methods is one of the mainstays of Scotland Yard. In ordinary cases of crime the first step is to decide who is likely to have committed the burglary or whatever it happens to be, after a full examination has been made of the methods employed. Criminals are creatures of routine and tend to repeat themselves; their methods are known, indexed and tabulated with great care. For example, a cat burglary takes place. The first question asked by Scotland Yard is, Where were the cat burglars at the time? A complete list is produced and checked one by one. Some of them are in prison, others have gone abroad to avoid prison. These can be eliminated, and the remainder are roped in and requested to prove their alibis. An unromantic but effective method, and, given the proper organization, one which works well in nearly all forms of crime.

There is one exception to this general rule. Murder lies altogether outside the scope of this method, and for a very simple reason. Very few people commit more than one murder, always ex-

cluding the years 1914 to 1918, when the highest ambition of all good citizens was to commit as many as possible, so the study of technique as an aid to identification is of very little use here. Each case must be tackled as a new problem, which explains why real murder cases often closely imitate those of fiction. It may be remarked in passing that it is rarely possible to take a crime plot from real life and make use of it for a novel or story. Reality is too inartistic and relies too much upon accident and coincidence to be of service to the novelist. For example, one of the most successful forgers who ever lived was caught because his moustache fell off on the counter of the bank while he was cashing one of his masterpieces. This incident contains nothing incredible or even improbable, except the gross carelessness of the forger in omitting to secure his disguise properly; it is, in fact, perfectly true, but no author would dare to submit it to his publisher as the basis of a story.

"I pulled Annie in twice," went on Drury. "She got off once as a first offender, and then she got six months. Still, her alibi is probably sound enough, in spite of her silly stories. If I know anything of Annie, she's got a dashed sight too much sense to lie about anything as important as that. Fetch the next one in, Leverton."

The sergeant went out through the clerks' office,

where Miss Morgan was repairing the emotional ravages of the last ten minutes with the aid of a mirror and a powder-box. He returned with Ginger Brown, who was in a state of extreme apprehension owing to his extensive previous acquaintance with the police in the days before he reached the sheltering haven of Reinold's Foundry. He stood in front of the desk, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other and twisting his tattered cap in his hands.

"Sit down," said Drury.

Ginger sat on the edge of the chair and passed his sleeve across his face as a substitute for a handkerchief.

"Where were you on Monday evening?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Think, then. I want to know. Nothing to be scared about. I'm only asking you a simple question."

Ginger looked down at his boots and up at the ceiling, anywhere but at Drury's face.

"I can't remember, sir."

This was reasonable enough. Most of us would have difficulty in detailing our movements at any given time during the past week. Drury realized this perfectly well, but it appeared to him—and he had had considerable experience in these matters—that the man was lying. It was very puzzling. Why should he lie? Surely he must have sufficient intelligence to see that the truth was the best and safest reply. The inspector had questioned thousands of people in his time and had learned to suffer fools patiently, if not gladly, so he repeated the question in greater detail. If a little explanation could overcome the obstacle and loosen Ginger Brown's tongue he was quite prepared to spend time in giving it. After all it was to his own interest as well as Brown's to elucidate matters. Unjustified suspicions meant unproductive work, and lots of it, and, while Drury was not afraid of work, he preferred to spend his time in ways which seemed likely to lead to results rather than in following up false trails. Besides, every false trail meant loss of time, and loss of time meant that the true scent was getting older and colder.

"Look here, my lad," he said, "I should try and remember if I were you—7:30 on the 18th was the time when Mr. Reinold was killed. I'm not accusing you or anybody else, but I want to know where everybody was at that time, and you can guess why. If you can prove where you were you're out of the case for good. See? If you can't we shall have to find out more about you."

Ginger Brown was staring at Drury with frightened eyes. He appeared to be trying to make up his mind. The inspector continued his monologue in level, dispassionate tones.

"We're not going to 'frame up' anything against you, but you must see that we are bound to follow it up if you can't tell us."

Candid but unkind friends had been known to state that Mr. Brown's head was solid bone right through. Certainly his brain was not of the best quality. It did work, however, though slowly, and the significance of the question at last dawned upon him.

"I'll tell you where I was, sir," he began breathlessly. Drury heaved a sigh of relief and leaned back in his chair to listen. "Do you know Marchant's old warehouse in King Street?"

Drury shook his head, and the disjointed story continued its rambling course.

"I wor there, sir, on the roof."

"On the roof? What for?"

"Taking some lead, sir." Ginger looked very sheepish. "There's a lot of owd lead on the roof and in t'gutters, and I thought I'd get a bit and sell it. I'd been there three or four nights and pinched about two hundredweight. I'd taken it home bit by bit—it wor mostly sheet lead, and I wound it round under my waistcoat so's I shouldn't have to carry a bag. I don't like carrying bags late at night." Ginger had got into trouble more than once in this way. "So on Monday I fetched t'last roll and took that home."

"Anybody with you?"

"No, sir, not then. But that wor early on in t'evening like. You can get to the back of t'warehouse safe enough in daylight. I had somebody wi' me at half-past seven, though."

Ginger's nervousness had nearly passed off after he had broken the ice of his confession. He realized that the damage was done so far as the petty theft was concerned, and he began to expound his alibi proper with some confidence.

"I'd told Tom Healey, the general dealer, that I'd got some lead for sale, and I hired a pony cart to take it to him. Leastways I borrowed it for t'price of a pint. He likes his pint does Joe Hemingway, and he'll do owt for you if you stand him one. I went round and fetched t'cart about seven, and I wor at Healey's by quarter-past. T'chap 'at t'cart belonged to wor there an' all, and we had a sup of beer and stopped while half-past eight."

"Where is this dealer's?"

"About three miles away, sir, and he'll tell you that I couldn't have been near the office when t'boss wor killed."

Drury took down the addresses of Tom Healey and the pony cart owner.

"It was all done in me spare time, sir," went on Brown. "It hadn't nothing to do with the firm."

"What firm?" asked Drury, puzzled.

"Reinold's, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, Mr. Harrison and Mr. Marston knew nothing about it."

"I see. Have you been in trouble before, Brown?"

"How d'you mean—in trouble?"

"Pinched," replied Drury concisely.

"Yes, sir," admitted Ginger reluctantly, after a pause.

"I thought so. Well, that's all, Brown. You can go now."

"Thank you, sir. You won't say anything about the lead, will you, sir?"

"Can't promise you that."

Mr. Brown, crestfallen but relieved, departed. Drury looked at Leverton.

"Queer lot of people they've got in this firm," he remarked. "Seems to be a sort of home for retired crooks—and I'm not so sure about them being retired, either."

"What made you think he was an old hand at it, sir?"

"He said he didn't like carrying a bag at night. Nobody's going to object to that unless they've already come to grief over it."

"That notepaper's a bit queer too, sir."

"It is; and what did he mean by saying that Harrison and Marston didn't know about the lead? It's not likely that our friends here would know anything about a few shillingsworth of lead, so probably he was telling the truth, but he certainly implied that they had been up to something or other, and Brown knows about it and thinks we know."

A smarter man than Ginger Brown would have been able to tell his story, when it became imperative to tell it, with artistic restraint. If he had merely given the names of the carter and the dealer it would have been sufficient. All Drury wanted was evidence of his whereabouts, and once satisfied on this point he would have dismissed him from his mind. The petty theft would certainly have passed unnoticed in the hue and cry of a serious crime. But the wretched Brown was so terrified at the mere thought of being suspected of murder that his one idea was to blurt out a true, comprehensive, convincing and complete alibi. This he certainly did, but, as it turned out afterwards, at a somewhat unnecessary cost to himself. Drury did not follow up the theft of the lead any more than was needful to check Ginger's movements, as he had something better, and bigger, to do. But Ridley naturally got to hear of it, and had to take action on a case thus thrust under his very nose. Ginger Brown eventually got six months as the price of proving his alibi.

Four more men were interviewed before Drury called a halt. He then sought the manager once more.

"I've seen as many as I want at present, Mr. Marston," he said. "I've got to check their stories now, and that'll keep me going for a while. There's just one thing I'd like to take with me from the office though, if you don't mind. I want that deed-box—you know, the one we put back in the safe. I want to send it to the finger-print people to have it examined."

"Certainly," replied Marston. "Mr. Harrison said you were to do just as you like and take anything you want." He glowed inwardly as he remembered the care with which he had polished the box. Thank goodness he hadn't forgotten that! Not that a man trained by Reinold was likely to overlook such a vitally important point.

Marston almost felt sorry for Drury. The man was such a colossal fool. Leaving the box in the office for several days and then expecting to find clues on it! True, it had been in the safe and not accessible to everybody, but still the principle of the thing was all wrong. He got the keys and opened the safe. The deed-box was lying on the top shelf in its usual place.

As a matter of fact one of the first things Leverton had done on the initial visit to the office was to

examine it thoroughly with the aid of dusting powder. He examined many other things as well the handle of the poker, the door-knobs and the telephone, to mention only a few. This was the merest routine work, which is never omitted. As finger-prints were completely absent on a surface admirably adapted for recording them, Drury had come to the conclusion that the box had been cleaned. Otherwise he would never have left it unguarded so long. This preliminary examination had been done when Marston was not in the room, so Drury's present request seemed reasonable enough.

Marston raised his arms to lift down the box. It had suddenly occurred to him that it wasn't a bad idea to leave his prints on the box now, innocently and in the face of the world, and then if his cleaning had not been thorough enough and some of his old finger-marks were still visible they would be of no value if he had touched it in the presence of a witness. From force of habit Drury stopped him.

"Better not touch it," he said.

Marston was forced to abandon his brilliant idea. Anyway, if some of his finger-prints were left it didn't matter. He could always explain that he had often handled the box in the ordinary routine of business. This was not true, but the detective

wouldn't know that. The only man who could contradict him was Wayland Harrison, and he wouldn't dare to. If he did insist that Marston had never been allowed access to the deed-box Marston would tell the police what it had contained, omitting all mention of the knife, and that would finish the firm of Reinold's and Wayland Harrison as well.

Drury felt in his pockets one after the other.

"Dash it, I've forgotten my gloves, and I don't want to handle it without. Can you lend me a pair?"

Marston went across to his overcoat, which was hanging behind the door.

"Yes, there's an old pair here. You can use these."

He restrained a smile with difficulty as Drury pulled on the old motor gloves and carefully lifted down the tin box. It appealed to Marston's ironical sense of humour to lend the identical pair of gloves which he had worn when cleaning up after the murder in order that this silly ass of a detective, who couldn't even remember his own gloves, might preserve non-existent finger-prints. Drury wrapped up his trophy in newspaper, returned the gloves to their owner and left the office.

"Take this box along to the police station and pack it up and send it off to Sir James," he said to Leverton when they got outside. "Put these envelopes inside and a note to tell him what we want him to do. When you've done that you can go round and see some of those witnesses and find out if the alibis are watertight. But get the box off first, because I shall be going up to town to-morrow. That'll keep you going for the rest of the morning, I think. When you've finished you can go into the question of the telephone numbers on the writing-paper. I'm going along to the station now."

He spent the whole of the afternoon interviewing porters, ticket collectors and booking clerks. He worked his way methodically downwards from the station-master through all the hierarchy of the railway as represented in Southbourne, even unto the boy who sold newspapers to the incoming trains. His task was easier than he expected. Marston had been a regular traveller for years owing to his bi-weekly visits to St. John's Hospital, and several of the staff knew him because of these. Moreover, since the cloak-room incident his fame had spread far and wide. A good many of the station staff had actually seen his arrest, and those who were unlucky enough to miss it had had him pointed out to them not once but many times by the fortunate ones on his subsequent journeys to the hospital. Mr. Garside was naturally an enthusiastic propagandist in this respect.

There were two ticket collectors standing by the

platform barriers, and Drury waited for an interval between trains before approaching them.

"Do either of you know Dr. Hemsworth?" he asked.

"I should think we do," replied the taller of the two, with a wink at his companion. "There's nobody here who doesn't know him."

Drury was inclined to agree with this; he had interviewed nine people already, who all knew him, but unfortunately none of them had been able to give him any useful information.

"Did you know him before he was arrested?"

"Yes, by sight. I didn't know his name then."

"Nor did I," put in the other collector. "But we've seen him oft enough, haven't we, Joe?"

"Ay. He used to catch the 1:20 every Tuesday and Thursday—or was it Friday?"

"Friday."

"And come back by the 5:10."

This confirmed what Drury already knew of Marston's bi-weekly trips to the hospital. It was quite an unimportant point, but still it marked a definite advance. Here were two men at last who knew something about Hemsworth apart from his personal appearance, and Drury promptly prepared to follow up his introductory questions with more vital ones. At this point there was an interruption. With a deafening shriek of escaping steam the 3:15

express slid gently to rest just short of the stop buffers. Doors swung open and the passengers poured out on to the platform and surged towards the barrier. Drury stood aside, and the ticket collectors closed the gates and prepared for work. The first arrivals were a crowd of schoolboys, who easily outdistanced their shorter-winded and more sedate elders. They passed rapidly through the gates in a pushing, struggling mob and for a second or two there was a lull. The first adult to arrive at the barrier was a flashily dressed man with a bowler hat on the back of his head and a near-diamond tie-pin. His air of jaunty assurance fell from him somewhat as he saw Drury.

"Why, hello, Jimmy," said the latter. "Don't look so upset. I'm not waiting for you. You don't mean to say you've actually bought a ticket?"

The bowler hatted man nodded, gave his ticket to the collector and passed on his way.

"Do you know who that was?" said Drury.

"No," replied the taller of the two officials.

"Might be useful to you if you did. He's a race-course tout who specializes in travelling without a ticket. I don't think he's ever paid a railway fare in his life. He'd be insulted and pained by the very thought of paying good money to a railway company. I remember once, when he was a bit canned, he told me seven different methods of working it."

"He'd got a ticket all right this time, anyway."

"Yes, and you'll find somebody else is short of one. I'm willing to bet on it. He has three different ways of pinching them, but his cleverest methods are those where he gets through without one at all."

Drury was right. Two minutes later a worried little man was standing at the barrier searching his pockets in vain for the ticket which he was sure he had possessed when he got in the train. The collector took the money for his fare, wrote out the receipt and allowed him to pass.

"Why didn't you stop him?" demanded the collector.

"Stop who—Jimmy? What for? For having a ticket? That's not an offence. You've got to have some shred of evidence even to arrest a person you know to be a criminal."

Drury turned round and scanned the station for the pickpocket. He was gone, but his brief presence had given the inspector an idea.

The stream of passengers thinned and then stopped altogether, and the collectors began to count their little bundles of tickets.

"Was Dr. Hemsworth in the habit of coming to the station at other times?" continued Drury.

He had clearly mapped out in his mind the information he required, and his questions were in no way haphazard, but part of a regular, carefully

thought-out plan designed to elicit full details of the suspect's movements and habits, or at any rate those of them which might have any bearing on the Reinold case.

"Do you mean during the last few days, sir?"

"No; I mean during the months or years you have seen him catch these trains."

"Never saw him except Tuesdays and Fridays till just lately."

"Oh, you have seen more of him lately, then?"

"Yes. About a fortnight ago he started coming here every day, sometimes two or three times a day."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I remember saying to Bill here that he looked at a loose end like. We wondered if he was waiting to meet anybody, because he kept hanging round the indicator."

"Why did you notice him specially?"

"Oh, I don't know. Because we knew him, I suppose, and because he'd never done it before."

Drury was overjoyed to hear this. It fitted in with his explanation beautifully. If the suit-case affair was a fake, as he strongly suspected, it was essential that Marston should keep himself informed as to the progress of his scheme. For until the leg was found and the police on the watch it was not safe to commit the real murder. This re-

connaissance work he could not very well do by deputy. Besides, there is nothing suspicious or dangerous in going to a station and looking at the train indicator and the book-stall.

If on the other hand the leg had been procured for genuine experimental purposes only, and with no ulterior motive, then these repeated appearances at the station become difficult to explain. Conceivably Marston might forget all about the leg and leave it long enough to be discovered. An ordinary person would not forget such a package if it was entrusted to his care, but doctors looked upon these things differently from the ordinary person. To them human bodies or parts of bodies were no more unusual and no more gruesome than are samples to a commercial traveller. Besides, these scientific chaps were often absent-minded, thought Drury. He was especially likely to have forgotten it if he had been away, but according to the evidence of the ticket collectors he had not been away. He had been seen at the station more or less every day instead of the usual twice a week. And, if he went to the station every day, his excuse of forgetfulness hardly held water. Surely in this case he would have remembered it during one or other of these visits.

The next morning Drury went up to London and made his way to St. Martha's Hospital. He passed

through the hospital quadrangle, where some of the patients were enjoying sunshine and tobacco, and finally arrived at the pathological block of the Medical School. He knocked at the door of Sir James Martin's private laboratory and entered. He knew that Sir James hated people to wait at the door.

The pathologist was sitting at a bench manipulating tiny flakes of paraffin wax with needles. He did not look up from his work.

"May I come in, sir?"

"Oh, it's you, inspector, is it? Yes, come along in by all means. I got your parcel this morning and started on it straight away. I shall be able to tell you one result in a minute or two. Of course I haven't had time to make really good sections yet, but I think these will be good enough."

On the bench in front of him lay two envelopes labelled in Drury's writing, "Hair from wrist-watch strap" and "Hair from Marston's gloves." Sir James took up a glass slide and clipped it on to the stage of his microscope. He adjusted the reflecting mirror to get a good light and focused the instrument.

"Have a look at that, Drury," he said, stepping aside. "Those are cross-sections of the hairs from the watch strap. Taken from a murdered man, you say?"

"Yes," replied Drury, applying his eye to the

microscope. "I found a wisp of that hair or fur, or whatever it is, caught in the buckle of the strap. There didn't seem to be anything like it on the body or near it, so I thought it was worth keeping. Later on I happened to notice that a man I suspect strongly had a pair of fur gloves, so I borrowed them and pulled a bit of the fur out."

In the illuminated field of Sir James's beautiful microscope were half a dozen small dark objects something like tiny dumb-bells.

"Most hairs are very difficult to identify," remarked Sir James. "Nearly all of them are rounded or oval and have no very distinctive features. There are just a few that can be spotted easily. The impala, or South African antelope, has hairs which are triangular in section, and the *Phocidæ,* or seal family, have cigar-shaped hair. Luckily these are one of the few easy ones, and they are really rather characteristic. They resemble metacarpal or finger bones when seen in section as they are now—a thick centre with a slight enlargement at each end."

"Dumb-bells," suggested Drury.

"Hardly. The enlargements at the end are not quite knobbly enough for that. Now compare this one."

Sir James slipped out the slide and substituted another.

"It looks just the same," said Drury.

"Quite. That's from your friend's gloves. It looks as though the murdered man's watch got caught on those gloves, doesn't it? The hair is rabbit hair in both cases, by the way. Of course I can't swear that both specimens came from the same rabbit—or the same gloves."

Drury gave a shrug of disappointment.

"Everything I get hold of seems to throw suspicion on this chap, but not a single point is any good as a proof. Can you do anything with that stain, sir?" Drury pointed to the lock of the deed-box, which had a reddish stain upon it.

"I've tested that already," said Sir James. "It's blood right enough. If you like I can even go further and do a precipitin test. Then I can tell you whether it is human blood or not. Will that help?"

"I don't think so, sir, unless you can tell me if it's the blood of this particular individual."

"I can't do that, I'm afraid, nor can anybody else. The utmost we can do is to divide all human bloods into four groups, as they do for blood transfusion. The smallest of these groups—Jansky's group four as it is called—contains about five per cent of the whole in European races, so even if this stain and the blood of your suspect both belonged to this group it wouldn't help much. There are two million others like it in this country alone. It doesn't

look as if I can help you much here. I'll tell you what I will do, though. I'll remove this stain and you can have your box back. And then if you want it tested any time it will be available."

"Thanks very much, sir."

Sir James carefully scraped the stain off the lock and deposited the little heap of brownish powder in a glass-stoppered bottle.

"I'll get some decent sections of these hairs cut as well," he went on, "in case you want them. That'll take a little time. They have to be cleaned with ether, alcohol and potash and then dehydrated. And then the embedding in wax and fixing on to the slides takes forty-eight hours. Let me know if there's anything else I can do, won't you?"

"I will, but it looks as if I shall have to wait for this chap to give himself away. I'm sure he's the man I want, but my evidence wouldn't hang a cat. You see, I haven't the remotest idea what the motive was, and you've got to have a very strong case in other ways if you don't know that."

The unsatisfactory interview concluded, and Drury returned to Southbourne feeling that very little progress had been made.

As soon as he got back Leverton brought in his report.

"I've gone on with the interviews, sir," he said,

"and checked 'em all. They're all right—every one of them."

"Good," said Drury. "Did you make anything out about the telephone numbers?"

"Yes, sir. The addresses on the writing-paper were Mr. Harrison's and Mr. Marston's. But the funny part of it is that they've got quite different numbers in the telephone book. I don't know why they should put the firm's number instead of their own on their private paper. Besides, they don't always do it. I've managed to get hold of some more specimens from both of them. I asked them a lot of silly questions about dates of employment and that sort of thing that I knew they couldn't answer from memory. I did this when they were just leaving the office last night, and they promised to look up the answers and let me know. They gave me these this morning."

The sergeant produced two sheets of notepaper and handed them to Drury.

"See, sir? Same addresses, but this time they've got their proper telephone numbers—the ones given in the directory."

"Yes, I see. Good man. What does it mean, my dear Watson?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Neither do I. There's something very queer about this firm, that's a certainty. Well, we shall

just have to bear it in mind. We may get to know what it means later on. I don't see that it can be anything to do with the murder, and that's what we've got to think about just now."

CHAPTER IX

MR. MARSTON KNOWS TOO MUCH

"I SHOULD like to have a talk with you some time, Mr. Marston," said Wayland Harrison. "About the firm, I mean. Now that Mr. Reinold is dead there will have to be some alterations and a certain amount of reorganization."

Marston was all attention. Was he going to be taken into partnership?

"There is no need for you to be uneasy," went on Harrison. "You will, of course, continue as manager. We can't spare you. In fact, I had thought of a ten per cent rise."

"Thanks very much, sir," said Marston conventionally, and the words nearly choked him.

He half shut his eyes to conceal his anger and disappointment. "Complacent old fool," he thought to himself. "No need to be uneasy! Ten per cent rise, indeed! What the hell does he think I am? An office boy? Does he really think he can buy me at that price now?" Marston thought with renewed satisfaction of the bent and blackened knife in the ashes of the furnace. It had long since been

thrown into the dust-bin, and its power was gone for ever. "I'm going to get a damned sight more than ten per cent out of this somehow or other."

A hundred a year was certainly poor compensation for the risks and penalties of murder.

"There's a lot to talk over," continued Harrison, "and I thought we might do it some week-end. Take a day or two off together and have a few rounds of golf somewhere and discuss business in the evenings. What do you say?"

"Good idea, sir."

"Right. Then what about next Saturday?"

"That'll suit me very nicely. Oh, no, I was forgetting. I'm fixed up for Scarborough next week-end. Going fishing, you know."

"Well, that'll do. I can come to Scarborough with you. It'll suit me as well as any other place. I can play golf while you fish."

"Why not come fishing too, sir?"

"Me? I'm not a fisherman. Can't see the fun of sitting on the pier and dangling a bit of string in the water all day."

"I'm not going to do that." Marston was slightly scornful, as a Davis Cup player might be if mistaken for a ping-pong enthusiast. "I'm going big game fishing for tunny."

"Tunny? I've seen something about that in the papers. Big things, aren't they?"

"Yes. They weigh five or six hundredweight, and you fish for them with a rod and line. Fearfully thrilling sport."

"Yes, I should imagine it is." Even the non-fisherman could appreciate the thrill of hooking a six hundred pounder. "How do you do it?"

"You go out in a motor-boat and hang round the fishing vessels while they're hauling their nets in. You have to be tied into the boat and harnessed on to your rod, of course. You couldn't stand the strain otherwise. Imagine quarter of a ton of solid muscle pulling at you! It's wonderful. Sometimes they tow the boat for miles."

"H'm, sounds better than hooking dabs in the harbour," conceded Harrison. "All right, I'll come with you. I'm a good sailor, that's one consolation."

Out at sea in a small boat with Marston—there were distinct possibilities in the idea, he thought to himself. Once get out of sight of witnesses and let Marston get interested in his fishing, and then—a blow on the back of the neck with a sandbag—not hard enough to kill—leaves no mark—push him overboard unconscious—death due to drowning—regrettable accident—no motive to be traced even if anybody suspected anything—nobody would suspect anything, anyway. Sounds feasible; must look into it and see if there are any flaws in the idea—rather

original to plan a murder with that damned fool of a Scotland Yard man nosing about the place. Well, well, original crimes are always the safest. Harrison tapped his pencil on his blotting-pad reflectively, and Marston rose to go.

"Any fresh news?" asked Harrison.

"About—the murder, sir?"

"Yes, of course. What do you think I'm asking about? The infantile mortality rate in Czechoslovakia?"

One of the reasons why Marston disliked his employer so intensely was this sarcastic rudeness of his.

"Nothing fresh, sir. Inspector Drury's still hanging about, but I don't think he's made much progress."

"Don't suppose he will, either. Between you and me, I don't think he's quite up to the job. He's always asking a lot of daft questions and never seems to do anything."

As the manager returned to his own room he was buttonholed by Drury.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Marston, I wonder if you could tell me something?"

"I don't know, inspector. I can if I know the answer."

"Do you happen to know whether Mr. Reinold's watch kept good time or not?"

"I really couldn't say." Was the man never going to stop asking futile questions about that confounded murder? Thank goodness they were futile, anyway! "I should think it probably did," he went on. "He was always punctual for appointments, and he was the sort of man who wouldn't wear anything cheap. Why did you want to know?"

"Well, in order to be certain about the time of the murder."

Marston's heart gave a violent jump, and he felt little beads of sweat stand out on his forehead. He was thankful that the corridor was dimly lighted. Had something gone wrong with his alibi? Impossible. It was fool-proof. It didn't matter much about the watch, in any case, thanks to his foresight in telephoning to the police and fixing the time that way. The inspector's next words were reassuring, and the rapid beating of his heart quieted down.

"It's like this. From the method of the murder we rather suspect it might be the work of a London man. Not that he makes a habit of murder, of course, but he's been in trouble once or twice before for assault, and he always uses a poker. Silly sort of weapon to use, because it's so easy to overdo things with it. However, people do do silly things, fortunately for us. He calls himself Hollis, but you don't know him, of course. He happened to be in

Southbourne that night, and he's accounted for his movements all right up to ten past seven. Well, Mr. Reinold's watch stopped at quarter past ——"

"Half-past," corrected Marston. This fool of a detective couldn't even get his facts right.

"Oh, yes, half-past. Silly of me. Probably it stopped when he was murdered, but the point is, was it reliable? You see, if it was half an hour fast, say, Hollis has an alibi. If it wasn't, then we shall have to question him a bit further."

Marston heaved a silent sigh of relief. This was splendid news. He felt no regrets for the unknown and unfortunate Hollis. Probably the man would be able to clear himself. Anyway, if he couldn't, that was his own lookout. So long as the police had somebody else under suspicion Marston felt more comfortable about himself. True, he was definitely out of the case, thanks to his brilliant cloakroom alibi, but all the same the sight of Drury patiently pottering about day after day was getting on his nerves.

"Will you want to get into the office during the week-end, inspector?" he asked. He did not want to appear too interested in these fresh developments.

"No, I don't think so."

"Because Mr. Harrison and I are going away to Scarborough on Saturday for a day's tunny fishing.

I'd better leave you my address in case you want to get in touch with us. If you like, I can leave the keys with you."

"No, it doesn't matter, thanks. I think I shall take the week-end off myself. I'm getting a bit tired of this case. Are you fishing off the pier or going out in a boat?"

"In a boat," replied Marston abruptly. He had no small reputation in the angling world as a big game fisherman, and it annoyed him to meet people who knew nothing about it. As if one fished for tunny off the pier!

Drury went back to the police station and began to write up his report for the day. Before he had finished it Ridley came in.

"What have you been doing with yourself this morning?" inquired the latter.

"Oh, nothing much. I've got two valuable bits of information, though. He's off to Scarborough for the week-end, so I shall go too. He's going out to sea in a boat. Says he's going fishing. He may be, but I shall go fishing as well, if he does. He might be trying to clear out of the country that way."

"You still think it's worth while following him?"

"I do. More than ever."

"Why?"

"Because of the other bit of news I got just now.

Did you find out for certain about Reinold's watch, by the way?"

"Yes. The only people who've seen it besides ourselves are Purley and Roberts. We haven't told anybody about it, and they're both perfectly certain they haven't. So that's that. Did he rise to the bait?"

"He did. Fell right into it with both feet," replied Drury, mixing his metaphors badly. "I invented an entirely imaginary criminal and said it had stopped at quarter-past, and he corrected me at once. Now, if nobody except the four of us has seen that watch since the murder, how did he know what time it had stopped? All he ought to have known was that we found the body about half-past."

"It was a bright idea of yours. No good as evidence, I suppose, because you didn't warn him beforehand."

"No; but it makes us still more certain that he did it, or at any rate knows more about it than he ought to. Stinie Morrison tripped up in the same way, you know. When he was arrested Inspector Wensley said, 'Stein, I want you,' and that was all. When they got him back to the cells he said he wanted to make a statement, as he had been charged with murder."

"What if Marston had spotted your game and suspected a trap?"

"He wasn't likely to do that. It was just casually mentioned in conversation and I didn't lay any stress on it. Naturally he had to correct it though, because his alibi falls to bits if the murder took place at quarter-past seven."

CHAPTER X

INSPECTOR DRURY COMPOUNDS A FELONY

DRURY and Ridley were continuing their council of war in the inspector's office.

"There's no question about it," remarked the former. "Marston's guilty right enough, but it's going to take a lot of proving. In fact, I don't see how we ever can prove it."

"You've had a good look round in his office, I suppose?"

"Yes. I've been left alone there several times, and I could find absolutely nothing. Three mornings running I've been there, and each time he made some excuse to leave me. I almost think he did it on purpose so as to show that he had nothing to conceal, and to let me find it out. There was a desk in the room and not a single drawer in it was locked. One of them had quite a lot of money in it too. Not that I'm suggesting that it's evidence of guilt to leave drawers unlocked. Still, he's either very careless or else he did it for a purpose, and from what I've seen of him he appears to be a most careful and methodical man in other ways."

"What were you looking for?"

"I don't know. Anything that might have any bearing on the case. I must say I don't like shots in the dark, but they sometimes come off."

Drury was silent for a moment. He was thinking of Jimmy, the bowler-hatted gentleman in purple and fine linen who never paid his fare.

"Ever meet Jimmy Greenough?" he inquired.

"No. Who is he?"

Drury explained.

"How does he do it?"

"Oh, he's got lots of different ways. Sometimes he gets on the train with a penny platform ticket, hides under the seat when the collector comes round and has somebody to meet him at the other end with two more platform tickets, which will pass them both out. You can get 'em from automatic machines, you know, so there's no check on them. That's a clumsy way, though, and it's only useful if you can get a carriage to yourself. If there's anybody else in the compartment you can't very well get under the seat. In that case he gets into conversation with somebody and manages to have a look at their ticket on some excuse or other. He makes a note of the number and then walks about in the corridor when the collector comes round. Sooner or later his turn arrives and the collector comes up to him. 'I've given you mine,' he says. If the collector is doubtful he pulls out his pocket-book and

explains that he always makes a note of the number in case the ticket gets lost. 'Look and see if you've got number so and so,' he says, and the collector looks and apologizes and passes on. He's got lots of other ways to fall back on if these fail. He's a most ingenious devil and a wonderful hand at telling the tale. I don't know why he hasn't gone in for the confidence trick. He'd make a fortune at it. I think he might be useful to us, and I'd like to get hold of him."

"Why? What can he do to help?"

"I don't think I'll tell you—yet," replied Drury. "But I'll write out a description of him, and you might pass it on to your men and ask them, if they come across him, to tell him I want him."

Drury refused to enlighten Ridley any further, but within four hours Mr. Greenough arrived at the police station. His peculiarities of dress made him easy to identify, and a point duty policeman had given him Drury's message. As it was just opening time Jimmy had a quick one to steady his nerves in preparation for a possible enforced abstinence. He then obeyed his instructions, for he was far too well known at Scotland Yard to risk disregarding such a request as this.

"I've been doing nothing, Mr. Drury," he began in an aggrieved tone as he was shown into Ridley's office.

"I know, Jimmy. You never have."

"No, but honest ——"

"All right. You needn't look so innocent. I don't want you officially."

Jimmy heaved a sigh of relief and his face brightened.

"That's better. I can hardly recognize you when you're wearing that look of childlike virtue. Now we can talk business. I want you to do something for me. It'll be worth a couple of quid to you if you do it and keep your mouth shut."

Jimmy cocked his head slightly on one side and listened with respectful interest. He was always ready to earn a couple of quid, and if he could at the same time do a favour to one of the C.I.D.'s best men so much the better. As regards keeping his mouth shut, he could do that very well in the metaphorical sense of the term, although untreated adenoids in his youth rendered the literal and anatomical fulfilment of this condition impossible. This vacant expression of his was worth several pounds a week in his peculiar profession. Many smart youths, misled by his guileless and rather stupid appearance, had attempted to win money from him during his frequent train journeys. This suited Jimmy very well, for there were possibly six people in the world who could have beaten him at cards. Three of them were in practice in New

York and the other three worked the transatlantic liners.

"Not a word about it to anybody, mind, or you'll get me shot," continued the inspector. "I want you to pick a pocket."

Jimmy's open mouth fell open still further and his eyes became one concentrated stare of amazement.

"It's a case of murder, and I'm short of evidence. You know we play fair. We don't fake anything ——"

"I know that," said Jimmy.

He bore no malice against authority for his frequent convictions. The game was played according to certain rules, and sometimes he won and other times he lost. But he knew the penalty and was always a good loser.

"But if this chap's guilty I want to prove it. If he isn't that ends the matter. If it was anything else I shouldn't ask you, but murder ——"

Mr. Greenough nodded assent. Murder was in a separate class from all other crimes, and the average professional criminal is just as shocked by it as the average respectable citizen. He would not have dreamt of assisting the police in a case of theft or forgery, nor would Drury have asked him.

That would be playing the traitor, and Jimmy

was strong on professional etiquette; but his reactions to murder were the same as those of the law-abiding, for murder is essentially an amateur crime. It involves anger, hatred, revenge and a whole scale of emotions which play no part in the philosophy of those who make their living by breaking the law. Jimmy looked upon his race-course occupation of pocket-picking as unemotionally as a city clerk regards his ledger posting. By it he gained his living, and that was all there was to it. It had the disadvantage that the police were apt to interfere, but then all trades and professions have their drawbacks. The ledger clerk, for instance, might get the sack, which could never happen to Jimmy. His railway exploits were merely incidental in order to cut down his overhead expenses. Constant travelling to race meetings all over the country would swamp all the profits of his industry if he paid for tickets every time.

Another point of view presented itself to Jimmy's acute mind. An unsolved murder mystery was always dangerous, especially to those who, like himself, lived outside the law. The police were fair enough, and he had no complaint against them on that score, but like everybody else they were liable to make mistakes. And, if a mistake was made and the real criminal missed, it was most likely that some unfortunate professional—perhaps even him-

self—might be wrongly accused. He shivered at the thought of it. Yes, it was decidedly to his own interest to help if he could. Besides, there was that two quid.

Drury's astounding request was quite illegal, and he knew it, but he knew also that Jimmy would not give him away. It was not altogether without precedent that a criminal's skill should be utilized for the assistance of the law. Safe breakers have sometimes been legitimately employed to open strong-rooms of which the key or the combination has been lost. Cases are on record during the war-time censorship period in which coiners rendered services to various countries by forging seals to refasten diplomatic mail-bags, which are officially and theoretically immune from censorship. As it has been said already, police officers possess very few privileges, so that they are sometimes compelled to break the law that they may prevent it being broken.

In the classical case of the Moat Farm murder Chief Detective Inspector Scott distinctly overstepped the bounds of legality. It will be remembered that the suspected man, Dougal, disappeared when the investigation began. Scott ascertained that most of his bank balance had been withdrawn in the form of Bank of England notes. Now, as these were the murderer's own property, the detective had no legal right to interfere with them in any way. However, he took it upon himself to stop payment, and Dougal was arrested when he attempted to change one of his notes. He was subsequently executed on evidence which left no shadow of doubt as to his guilt, but there is equally no doubt that it was an unlawful action which led to his arrest.

"Well, now, look here," went on Drury, "this chap has asked me to go to his house to-night. I'm going to call for him at his office. If you pick us up outside and follow you'll probably get a chance. He's got a pocket-book full of letters and things which he keeps in the inside pocket of his coat—right-hand side, of course—and I'd like to have a look at it. There may be nothing in it of any use, probably won't be, but it's worth trying."

"Right-oh, sir. I'll get it for you if I have half a chance. Can I keep the doings?"

"No, certainly not," snapped Drury. "If you take anything out of it I'll break your neck—no, I won't; I'll charge you with picking pockets!"

"If you do I'll have you in as an accessory," grinned Jimmy.

"Do you think anybody would believe you?"

"No, perhaps they wouldn't."

"Anyway, have a shot at it, and if you succeed meet me here at about ten and I'll see you don't lose by it."

Half an hour later Drury strolled up to the front door of Reinold's offices, followed at a discreet distance by Jimmy. The latter stopped about twenty yards away and became interested in the contents of a tobacconist's shop window. There was a mirror conveniently placed at the back of the window display, through which Jimmy could watch Reinold's without turning round. Presently he saw the inspector come out, accompanied by another man. As soon as he saw which way they turned he set off after them. There was no particular need for caution, as he was a stranger to the district, so he was able to keep close behind without attracting attention. Also, as it was just after five o'clock, the streets were crowded with people hurrying homewards.

After walking about two hundred yards the inspector and his companion halted at a bus stop. Marston had suggested walking home, but Drury pleaded slight lameness owing to a badly fitting shoe. This he did with a purpose, knowing that the bustle and confusion on the steps of a bus were of great assistance to gentlemen of Jimmy's profession. After a wait of two or three minutes a bus arrived, and Drury and Marston eventually struggled upstairs and secured the last two seats on the upper deck.

"Ah, well, I'm not sorry we're riding after all,"

remarked Marston. "I feel a bit shivery. Got an attack of ague coming on, I think."

"Have you?" replied Drury sympathetically. "Perhaps you'd rather I didn't come to-night?"

"Oh, no, I didn't mean that. It'll soon pass off. I know them. I've had them before—had them for several years in fact."

By the time Drury had filled and lighted his pipe the bus had arrived at their destination, which was only about three-quarters of a mile from the office. He followed Marston down the steps on to the conductor's platform. Jimmy was just emerging from the downstairs compartment, but gave no sign of recognition. He pushed rudely past and walked off without a backward glance.

The two men turned down a street close by and entered the first gate on the left-hand side. Number 1 Convent Road was a large bay-windowed house standing in a carefully kept garden. Marston opened the front door with his latch-key and ushered the inspector into a nicely furnished lounge hall. On the walls were several glass cases containing angling trophies, mainly silver cups and stuffed fish.

"Leave your hat and coat here and come through into the dining-room," said Marston.

Drury did so and followed his host into a very comfortable bachelor apartment. A huge fire blazed in the grate, lighting the panelled walls with a cosy

glow. Deep leather chairs flanked the hearth-rug, a pipe rack hung over the mantelpiece, and there were ash-trays in profusion. Boxes of cigars were carefully stowed by the side of one of the latest model wireless gramophones, just at the right distance from the fire to keep the delicate leaf in first-class condition. Evidently a room meant for use and not for show. In the corner near the door were long fishing-rod cases leaning against the wall.

"Take a pew," said Marston, sinking into one of the armchairs and unlacing his shoes. "Excuse me putting on my slippers, won't you? I shan't be going out again this evening, and I like to be comfortable, especially when one of these beastly ague attacks is coming on. There's one thing about my housemaid: she knows when to mend the fire. She doesn't wait till she hears you open the front door to do it. By the way, will you have a cigar?"

"No, thanks. I'll stick to a pipe if you don't mind."

Drury was not a lover of cigars. Besides, it didn't seem quite the thing to accept an expensive cigar—and they were expensive ones—or any other sort for that matter, from a man whom he was trying to convict. Marston took one himself and leaned back in his chair.

"Well, how are you getting on, inspector?" he asked.

"Not too well," was the reply. Drury did not ask to what Marston was referring. He looked at his host to see whether his face expressed satisfaction or the reverse.

By accident or design, however, Marston expelled a cloud of cigar smoke just at the critical moment, and the blue, drifting haze obscured his expression.

"That's bad news," he said. "But it must be very difficult. Personally I can never understand how you find these things out unless you catch people in the act."

"That isn't often done."

"No, I suppose not. As I was saying, it's all very well in the detective stories—they always find convenient clues—but it must be very different in real life."

"It is," agreed Drury.

"I always think the best detective stories are never written," continued Marston. "If you take up the morning paper any day you see lots of them. But they always miss out the part that matters. Only last week there was a case that puzzled me. Some cloth was stolen from a mill, about a hundred pounds worth, I think. That happened in Leeds. Well, yesterday two men were charged with stealing it. One of them lived in Bradford, and the other somewhere near Doncaster. How do they do

it, that's what I want to know? They can't turn Scotland Yard on to every potty little robbery all over the country, and, even if they did, what have they to go upon and how do they trace it to people living twenty miles away in another town altogether? One of the most thickly populated districts in the country too. It beats me, and the papers never tell you how it's done."

"Oh, that's merely routine stuff," explained Drury. "Team work entirely. It would be no good trying it single-handed. This is what happens. The local police would get full technical descriptions of the stolen cloth, and samples as well, and they would circulate these to all the other police forces for miles round. Then inquiries would be made in all these places."

"Yes, but what sort of inquiries? I shouldn't care to go round Southbourne looking for somebody who'd stolen something in Manchester without knowing who he was or anything about him. What's the secret of it? You say team work, but I don't see that a hundred men in a hundred towns would have any better luck."

"It's very simple, but it'll spoil it if I give the show away. You get a trade directory and find out all the cloth merchants and dealers in your area. Then you go round and interview them with your descriptions and samples. Sooner or later somebody, perhaps twenty miles away from the place where the cloth was stolen, will say, 'Yes, I bought some cloth like that yesterday.' Then you get a man who knows something about cloth to see if it is the same stuff. If it is, the next question is 'Who did you buy it from?' If he bought it innocently he tells you, and you go and see them. Perhaps you trace it back in this way through three or four hands. Then you come to somebody who won't tell you where he got it, or tells you a yarn that you find is all wrong when you check it. Now you're getting warm. You say, 'All right, if you won't tell me who sold it to you, you will be charged with receiving stolen goods.' That does the trick every time. He gives you the names and addresses of the thieves, and all you have to do is to call round and collect them."

"Oh, is that all?"

"Yes, that's the usual procedure. It isn't anything like as romantic as Sherlock Holmes and his deductions, but it generally works pretty well. I fancy the Sherlock Holmes methods wouldn't work at all in that sort of case."

"There's nothing in it when you've explained it," laughed Marston.

"That's what Dr. Watson always said," commented Drury dryly.

Marston smoked in silence for a while and then

tossed his cigar stump into the fire. He looked at his watch.

"Excuse me for a few minutes," he said. "I promised to ring up Harrison this evening. I think I shall catch him in now."

He left the room and shut the door behind him. Presently Drury heard the unintelligible one-sided murmur of a telephone conversation. The instrument was in the next room, to judge by the sound of Marston's voice. The inspector got up and went to the window, which was open. He leaned out and looked round. The overhead telephone wires ran to a bracket at the corner of the house, not more than six or seven feet above his head. From this bracket lead-covered wires ran down the wall and disappeared through the next window. By standing on tiptoe and leaning out as far as he could Drury could just reach the wires as they ran diagonally across the wall. He got hold of them and pulled. Nothing happened. He pulled again, harder this time. The flimsy nails tore out of the mortar and the wires hung loose. Another pull tore them away from their fastenings above and effectually cut off the telephone from its connection with the outer world.

Drury dropped the loose ends on to the flower-bed beneath and tiptoed back to his chair. The mumbled drone on the other side of the wall continued unchecked. There was no doubt about it. The telephone call was a fake. Drury's guess about being purposely left alone in the office was confirmed. Marston was evidently piling precaution on precaution—a very common mistake. Not satisfied with his alibi alone, he was deliberately setting out to prove how innocent he was in case anything went wrong. What better method could he choose than to invite a detective into his house and leave him to his own devices?

Drury had no fears about his wilful damage to the property of the Postmaster-General. It would certainly be found out, but would be attributed to accident or mischievous boys. The real cause would never be guessed.

The conversation flowed on unceasingly, and Drury distinctly caught the words "Another three minutes, please." He got up again and began to look round the room. Knowing what he knew, he was perfectly certain that he would find nothing. He rapidly went through the heaped-up litter on the mantelpiece—letters, bills and invitation cards; nothing of any importance. He walked across to a writing-table on the other side of the fireplace and tried the drawers. They were all unlocked and contained nothing but the usual stationery and odds and ends which accumulate in every bachelor's room. The bookshelves were occupied by novels,

medical books and business volumes, including catalogues of all kinds, manuals of practical book-keeping and business management, and technical works on metallurgical subjects. It was just such a mixed collection as Marston might be expected to have amassed in his curiously assorted career.

Drury went back to his chair and put his hand in his pocket for his tobacco pouch. His fingers met some strange object, and he pulled it out and stared at it. It was Marston's pocket-book! There was no doubt about it. He had seen it several times and recognized it at once. It was an expensive affair of soft Russia leather with a gilt monogram in one corner. He thrust it back into his pocket with a smile. The excellent Jimmy had more than fulfilled his contract.

Footsteps approached the door, and Marston entered the room to find his guest comfortably sprawling in an armchair and lighting his pipe with a spill of paper torn off the edge of the "Southbourne Evening News."

"There's one disadvantage about Harrison," he said. "He's always wanting to talk business in the evening. Why can't he say all he has to say in office hours?"

"That's the penalty of being a manager," replied Drury.

"I suppose it is. We should grumble still more

if there wasn't any business to talk about. I must say the bosses have kept things going very well even when trade was as bad as it could be. That's one reason which makes me think you're wasting your time bothering about employés of the firm. I think the murderer must have been an outsider. After all, unemployment has been so bad since the war that no sane man with a good permanent job is going to kill his employer. It's like killing the goose with the golden eggs."

"Perhaps you're right," conceded Drury. "Still, we can't take anything for granted, and when there isn't anything to go upon we have to start somewhere, and it's easier to start on a small, definite group of people than to forage round among the remaining forty million inhabitants of the country."

"It's certainly a big job," said Marston. "Sounds pretty hopeless to me. You can't even send round samples of cloth in this case, can you?"

"No, murder is a bit out of the ordinary routine. One has to have patience." Drury shaded his eyes with his hand and looked unobtrusively at his host to see the effect of his next sentence. "The thing is to collect as much information as possible and then wait. Sooner or later they nearly all make a mistake, and then you've got them like that."

His hand came down with a crash on the arm of his chair, and Marston jumped. His ruddy face

seemed to be a little paler than usual. He shivered and leaned forward to put more coal on the fire.

"This beastly ague's getting worse," he said. "I'm going to bed early to-night."

Drury took the hint and rose to go. He was anxious to examine his trophy, and so he was by no means sorry for an excuse to leave.

When he got back to the station Jimmy was waiting for him in the inspector's office with his feet on the fender and an incredibly short cigarette end stuck on his lower lip. It was a new thrill for Jimmy to be a voluntary guest of the police, and he was enjoying it. Many times before had he been in similar bare rooms with official notices pinned on the limewashed walls and policemen's helmets hung on pegs, but always as a preliminary to a sojourn in a still more Spartan apartment with the door locked. To feel that he could smoke, that he could even get up and go if he wanted to, was something quite unique in his experience.

"Satisfied, Mr. Drury?" he queried.

"Quite, thanks. You did it very neatly. I didn't feel you put it in my pocket."

"Aw, well," said Jimmy modestly, "it's easy to put things into people's pockets. The hard part of the job is to get things out." He chuckled, as though enjoying some subtle joke. "Besides, I thought you'd like to have it as soon as possible so

that you'd know I hadn't had time to mess about with it."

The inspector took out the pocket-book and began to empty its contents on to the table. There were four or five pound notes, at which Jimmy's eyes gazed wistfully, a book of stamps, half a dozen letters and a pamphlet issued by H.M. Stationery Office. Drury read through all the letters and shook his head.

"Looks as if you'd had your trouble for nothing, Jimmy," he observed, refilling his pipe.

"For nothing? Don't I get the two quid?"

"Oh, yes. That was an advance contract for professional services. What I meant was that these letters aren't any good to me." Drury felt in his pockets. "Lend me a match, Jimmy."

Mr. Greenough handed over a box and the inspector lit his pipe. He passed the box back, but it was waved aside with lordly generosity.

"Keep it, Mr. Drury. It's yours, anyway. I was short of matches on the bus, and I borrowed it when I planted the pocket-book on you."

"Jimmy," said Drury, "I always knew you were good at your job, but I didn't know you were as good as that." The sentence tailed off into a shout of laughter.

"Aw, it's nothing," said the gratified Jimmy. Praise from this quarter was praise indeed. "You

weren't thinking about yourself. You were bothering about him. I'd never try it on you serious like."

Drury took up the pamphlet and turned over the pages. It was a list of Government publications, ranging in bewildering variety from bacteriology to statistics, from Army accounts to Arabic grammar, from Camel Corps regulations to howitzer handbooks, from military law to X-ray apparatus. One of the books in the list, the "Manual of Seamanship," was marked in blue pencil.

"Nothing here," muttered Drury as he folded up the leaflet and returned it to its place in the compartment next to the letters. "Nothing wrong in ordering a 'Manual of Seamanship,' especially for a man who's a fisherman. Well, Jimmy, how are we going to get this back without him knowing about it? Turn your brains on to that, will you?"

"I could put it in his pocket to-morrow."

"Yes, but he'll probably miss it when he's dressing in the morning, and then if it turns up again in a pocket which he knows to be empty what's he going to think?"

Jimmy tried again.

"Leave it on his garden path so's he'll think he dropped it."

"Yes, and somebody else will pinch it. That won't do."

"Put it through his letter-box, then."

"That's a better idea. I noticed this evening when he opened the door that he picked up some letters from the mat. If I push it through he'll think he dropped it. Good job there isn't a box fitted on the door, though."

"Yes," agreed Jimmy. "He'd hardly believe he'd dropped it into the box."

Drury paid off his accomplice and went straight round to Convent Road. All was in darkness as he stole up to the front door. He lifted up the flap and pushed the pocket-book through the slit. There was a soft flop as it fell on to the mat. He carefully lowered the metal flap so that it made no noise and went back to his lodgings.

CHAPTER XI

THE PATHOLOGIST DRAWS BLANK

In spite of the fiasco of the pocket-book incident, Drury went to bed with the feeling that his visit to Marston's house had not been altogether wasted. Why this was so he could not say, and at the time did not try to find out. He had had a long day and was too tired to make the effort.

The subconscious mind is a curious thing. It continues to work irrespective of the wishes of its owner, and is unaffected by fatigue and sleep. This fact is generally recognized, even by the most unscientific, for it is a common custom, when an important decision is to be made, to "sleep on it." Many problems that have baffled the efforts of the waking mind yield to the constant vigilance of the subliminal consciousness.

It was nothing very extraordinary, then, when Drury woke in the middle of the night to find that he had identified the elusive clue of the previous evening. No less than three times had Marston mentioned his attack of ague. Ague? Surely that meant malaria, and malaria could be diagnosed by

examination of the blood. And in Sir James Martin's possession was a bloodstain which had been scraped off the deed-box found open and empty on the murdered man's desk. With a sigh of content Drury turned over and went to sleep again.

Some hours later he took the first train to London and made his way to St. Martha's Hospital. Once more he crossed the square to the pathological department and entered the professor's private laboratory.

"What, back again?" was the pathologist's greeting.

"Yes, sir. You remember that bloodstain you scraped off the deed-box?"

There was an affirmative grunt from Sir James.

"Well, the man I suspect is subject to attacks of ague. Does that help at all? I've heard people talk about blood tests in malaria, and ague is the same thing, isn't it?"

"It might. It is," was the reply.

Drury looked puzzled.

"You shot a double question at me, so I gave you both answers at once. What I meant was that it might help, and that ague is the same as malaria. It's an old name for it—rather a vague word really. English is a damned silly language, isn't it? Ague and vague ought to rhyme, but they don't."

Sir James, who was in an unusually chatty mood

that morning, unlocked a cupboard and produced a small stoppered bottle.

"Here it is," he said. "I always keep your specimens locked up so that nobody can interfere with them. I'm not certain whether I shall be able to make anything out of a dried stain, but I can try at any rate. Generally, when I'm testing for malaria, I make a thin smear of fresh blood on a slide and examine it under the microscope, and then do the same with a stained specimen. But in this case it's no good trying to see anything without staining."

While Sir James was talking he was already making preparations for the test. He took a couple of specially cleaned, grease-free coverslips of thin glass from the jar of alcohol in which they were stored, flamed off the spirit and clipped them in spring forceps for ease of handling.

He then tipped a little of the powdered blood-stain into a watch glass and added a few drops of saline solution. He stirred it thoroughly with a glass rod and placed a drop of the mixture on each coverslip. Picking up the forceps, one pair in each hand, he waved them gently to and fro over a lighted gas jet until the liquid on the coverslips was evaporated. He then put them down on the scarred and discoloured work-bench and took a small bottle out of a rack.

"This is Leishman's stain," he explained. "It is a double dye made by dissolving methylene blue and eosin in alcohol."

As he spoke he flooded the two tiny glass squares with the deep blue fluid.

"Now we wait for one minute to let the alcohol fix the blood film so that it won't wash off the glass."

At the end of sixty seconds he ran a few drops of distilled water on to each specimen with a pipette. The little blue pools of stain rippled and shimmered in the glare of the electric light as the water and the alcohol mixed.

"Now we let that stain act for about five minutes."

Sir James got off his stool and sought a more comfortable resting-place for his portly figure.

"If I find malaria parasites in this specimen, and if you can prove that your man has got malaria, it will be a useful leg up for you, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. It's by no means conclusive, of course, but it would be a valuable addition to other evidence. Malaria's pretty rare in this country, isn't it?"

"Yes. I've no idea what percentage of people have it, but it must be very small. It's a notifiable disease, so you should be able to find some statistics somewhere which would tell you exactly how common it is. I should get on to the Ministry of

Health about that, if I were you. They're great on statistics. But if I don't find any parasites you needn't call me into the witness-box about this blood-stain. I shan't be able to say anything useful, and I hate to be vague and indefinite. It gives expert evidence such a bad name."

"They generally treat you pretty kindly, don't they, sir?"

"Oh, yes. Scientific evidence is much more popular now than it was fifty years ago. Judges used to hate it, and juries couldn't understand it. There was once a judge who said, 'There are liars, damned liars and expert witnesses!' It isn't quite as bad as that now."

Sir James went back to the bench and poured his pools of stain down the sink.

"Now we wash the blood films with distilled water, dry them with blotting-paper and—here they are."

The pathologist put one of the coverslips on a slide and adjusted it on the stage of his microscope.

"H'm, not a bad film," he said, "considering how long it's been dry. I can see the corpuscles very well. I may find the parasites in a few minutes, or it may take longer. If I don't find any I shall have to search for at least half an hour before I can say that the test is negative. Will you wait?"

"Yes, I'll wait."

At the end of half an hour Sir James looked up.

"Not a single parasite to be seen, Drury."

"Oh, well, can't be helped. I shall have to go back to Southbourne again. I'm getting sick of the sight of that beastly brass foundry."

"That what?" almost shouted Sir James.

"Brass foundry."

"Brass foundry?" The conversation was becoming monotonous. "Why didn't you say so before, man?"

Drury was astonished at this outburst. What was the professor getting at? Sir James switched off his microscope lamp and went back to his chair. He leaned back like a benevolent porpoise.

"Sorry I shouted at you, inspector. But you've just given me the solution of your conundrum. When you came in talking about ague I was rather surprised to hear the word, because it is nearly obsolete. People used to talk about ague before the Fen country was drained, when it was a common disease, but for every person who uses the word to-day there are a hundred who only know it as malaria. But there is a condition—an industrial disease—known as brass-founder's ague, which still keeps the old name. Of course it has nothing to do with real ague. It got the name because it gives rise to shivering attacks something like malaria. It is due to inhalation of the fumes of molten metal.

It used to be thought that the copper in the brass alloy caused it, but it is really a form of zinc poisoning. It's probably this sort of ague that your man's got, as he works in a brass foundry, so I'm afraid those blood films are wasted labour after all."

"Sorry, sir. I've never heard of this."

"No, of course you haven't. Why should you?"

"The point is, is it any use to us?"

"I don't know. Let me think. I suppose a person who gets this ague has a certain amount of the metal in his blood. One could examine for that, and if it was present it would be justifiable to assume that the bloodstain was made by some one who worked in a brass foundry."

"Might be worth doing," suggested Drury hopefully.

"Yes, it might. I shall have to look it up and find out all I can about it. It's a rare disease and I haven't met it very often. Give me a week to read it up and see if it's worth while doing an analysis."

"Right, sir." Drury picked up his hat and turned to go. It looked as though a meagre scrap of evidence was at last emerging from the mass of uncertainty and conjecture which made up the Reinold case.

"Wait a minute," said Sir James, in such a tone that the inspector's hopes fell to zero once more.

"I've just thought of something. You remember I scraped that bloodstain off the brass lock?"

"Yes, sir. I remember that."

"Very well, then, it's no good. If you tried to use it in evidence the defence would at once argue that any excess of metal in the blood had come from the lock, and you couldn't deny it. I'm afraid I'm not going to be much help in this case, Drury."

"That's all right, sir. Not your fault. I shall have to go back and try something else."

CHAPTER XII

SCARBOROUGH

Of Drury's journey from Southbourne to Scarborough there is nothing of interest to record. At a discreet distance he and Sergeant Leverton followed Marston's car past the beautiful green carpets of Ganton golf links along a road lined with vivid coloured petrol pumps and infested with stop-me-and-buy-one men.

As soon as they reached the centre of the town Drury got out in order to arrange about hiring fishing-tackle and a boat before it was too late, while the sergeant went on in the car in order to see that Marston really did go to the address which he had given.

The inspector followed the tramlines down the slope of Eastborough towards the harbour. On the way he came across a fishing-tackle shop, so he stopped to inspect the window display. There were rods of all qualities and all prices. Starting at half a crown, for ordinary bamboo sections with rough brass sockets, they progressed steadily upwards in

an ascending scale of workmanship through well-made split cane rods with neatly fitting suction joints and comfortable cork handles, and culminated in a display of tunny tackle which amazed Drury by its price. One outfit, stated to contain everything requisite, was priced at fifty-seven pounds. Next to it were complete fishing lines on wooden frames at sixpence and a shilling each.

"Them's more i' my line," remarked a man standing by Drury's side.

"In mine too," agreed the inspector. "It's extraordinary how the prices vary, isn't it?"

"Ay, but it's the same i' most things, tha knows. I' my job—making golf-clubs—we has all sorts to make. Some on 'em's sold at five bob apiece retail, and they've got shafts on 'em like cricket stumps. Made out of floor boarding, by the feel of 'em. Others is thirty shillings, and they're real good stuff. If you want owt good you've generally got to pay a bit of extra brass for it."

"Not generally," amended Drury. "Always."

"Noa. Tha's wrong theer. I know one thing wheer t'best's t'cheapest. T'doctor told my missus about it when t'first babby wor born."

Drury tried to think of prams, cots, baths or other infantile necessaries which might fulfil this paradox, but had to confess defeat. In his experience extra quality invariably meant extra cost.

"I give it up," he said at length.

The little artisan regarded him with comical friendliness.

"Breast feeding," he replied with a grin. "Well, I'll be getting on, mate. Got to buy some rock for t'kids."

He pushed his cap a few degrees further back on his head and dived into a confectioner's shop next door.

The inspector walked on and rounded the sharp, double corner at the bottom of Eastborough, which always looks so unsafe as the unwieldy trams squeal their way slowly round it. He found himself opposite the fish pier, which he had not seen for nearly twenty years. It seems to have changed little. Close by stood a black, police telephone-box which was new since his last visit, and on the pier itself were roundabouts and ice-cream stalls which were not there before the war. Absent, too, were the neatly braided rope fenders which all boats used to carry. Their place is taken by worn-out motor tyres, which are ugly but cost nothing and are just as efficient.

He went to the office of Hardy Brothers, the fishing-tackle manufacturers, and arranged to hire a tunny outfit for the following day. Then there only remained the question of procuring a boat. A motor-coble was essential, he was told. Rowing-

boats were inadequate for a journey of ten to fifteen miles out to sea.

Hardy's representative stepped out of the office and hailed a fisherman who was walking past.

"Will you take this gentleman out for tunny to-morrow, Jennings?"

As this meant for the boatman the opportunity of earning four pounds, which is the standard daily rate for a coble and crew, it might be expected that he would have closed with the offer with alacrity. But the East Coast fisherman is not built that way. The man pulled up the flapping top of one of his thigh boots—the old-fashioned leather sea-boot is obsolete, killed by the lighter foreign made rubber wader—and regarded Drury with a gloomy stare.

"I don't rightly know," he began. "We've just been overhauling her and we haven't got t'ingine ready yit. Leastways, it's ready, but we haven't tried it. And t'shops will be shutting soon and I haven't any oil."

"Well, you'll have plenty of time to get some and to try your engine. You won't be going out till six o'clock in the morning."

"Will ye want a chair?" went on this inveterate obstructionist, abandoning his first objections. "Because I haven't got one."

"No, herring-boxes will do if they're firmly tied down."

"Oh, all right," said Mr. Jennings in an aggrieved tone, "I'll ask Tom where the herring fleet is." He went outside and bellowed across the pier, "Hey, Tom, how far out are the trawlers?"

"Aboot twelve mile," was the shouted reply.

"Well, will you do it?" asked the representative of the Hardy firm.

"Ay," said Mr. Jennings, without enthusiasm. "Half-past six in t'morning, you say?"

"About that."

The boatman departed in the direction of an oil-shop, and Drury burst out laughing.

"Do they always hate the sight of a customer?" he asked.

"Not always, but some of them are funny chaps to deal with. He's a good man, though, and he'll be quite all right as soon as he gets out."

Drury's arrangements for the morning were now completed, so he walked on down the fish pier. The tide was out, and the harbour consisted mostly of a stretch of black mud, furrowed by the drag of innumerable keels and mooring ropes. Gray-flecked gulls paraded its slimy surface, leaving behind them a multitude of little triangular footprints. The land-borne breeze lost its flavour of asphalt and petrol, and brought with it a salty tang as it swept across the seaweed-strewn mud and the slippery decks of the drifters lying alongside the quay.

Glittering fish-scales lay everywhere, spangling like sticky sequins the thigh boots of the boatmen and the hands of the fish salesmen.

Scores of boats lay in the harbour—rowing-boats, motor-cobles, steam-drifters and their larger, iron-built brethren, the trawlers. One or two motor-boats and half a dozen yachts were moored on the far side of the basin near to the white pleasure steamer "Bilsdale," whose dumpy paddle-boxes made her look clumsy and deformed compared to the weather-beaten but shapely lines of the trawlers. They were all helplessly stuck on the mud, dwarfed and foreshortened as one looked down upon them from the height of the pier. A few of the sharp-keeled yachts lay over on their sides, but the flatter-bottomed majority were upright, even with no water to support them.

They were attractively and even poetically named, most of these dingy looking fishing vessels, although the present occupations of their crews were prosaic in the extreme. Drury noticed a freshly washed pair of yellow oilskin trousers hanging out to dry on the striped wheelhouse of "Treasure Reaper." A boy peeling potatoes into a bucket sat below him on the deck of "Rising Moon." A one-armed man was scrubbing shelving boards belonging to "Zealous Harvester," and baited crab-pots loaded with lumps of rusty iron were being stowed

in a huge pile in the bows of the coble, "Star of the East."

Further along the pier was a large shed in which fish were being sold and packed for transport. Two men with tin scoops were shovelling alternate layers of herrings and broken ice into barrels, watched by a large crowd of trippers. Another was slicing off fish heads with dexterous rapidity and packing the bodies in boxes. The severed heads accumulated in a grisly pile at his feet. A lorry laden with sacks of crushed ice ploughed its way slowly through the crowd and began to deposit its dripping load at the top end of the shed, where a raucous voice incessantly shouted unintelligible technicalities. Drury followed the lorry, ducked under a suspended hose-pipe which led across the quay wall and down into a trawler's water tanks, and the voice grew louder and more raucous as he approached.

"At twenty-three bob two of them who's having 'em come on twenty-three and six twenty-three and six going at twenty-four shillings. . . ."

The auctioneer and his followers moved on a few paces, and a man bent down and slapped labels on to a wet heap of fish. Evidently business had been done, though how or by whom was not apparent to the uninitiated.

Drury stepped over a tangle of ropes which led from a bollard to a row of boats resting on the

mud. He rounded the far end of the shed and looked across the bay. The curve of the foreshore could be seen, with its white painted restaurants and the dingy backs of brick houses behind and above them. More to the left stood the higher part of the South Cliff, grimly aloof in its inviolate respectability, and below it were the green-tufted ramparts of the Spa.

On this side of the pier was a large canvas tent, containing, according to the placards outside, the embalmed body of a thirty-ton whale, which could be inspected on payment of sixpence. In front of the tent was a selection of harpoons and other whaling weapons to kindle the curiosity of the passers-by. A voluble crowd stood gazing at the harpoons, but business did not seem to be brisk at the moment, and the girl in the pay-box was reading a novelette. The Yorkshireman, which includes also the female of the species, is reluctant to devote to esoteric entertainment money which might be spent in more familiar and well tried amusements.

"Eh, sitha, it's a whale."

"I bet it isn't a real 'un."

"It says it is."

"Sixpence to go in? Nay, it's a lot of brass, lad. We haven't been on t'miniature railway yet, tha knows. I'd sooiner spend it on that."

"Ay, me an' all. And think on we've got to get t'return tickets too. Save enough for them, Fred."

"I went to Blackpool for a week-end last feast 'olidays, and I wor that poorly all t'time. It wor a shocking waste of brass. I might as well 'ave stayed at hoam." The speaker was a large, fat woman, obviously more interested in personal reminiscences than in seeing the sights. "Look at them young hussies," she continued in an acid tone. "I calls it disgusting."

Two girls, clad in brilliant hued beach pyjamas, swung past them with the magnificent arrogance of youth. The wind blew the cheap, thin fabric against their bodies as they walked, revealing every line of their figures. They overheard the remark. One of them put her tongue out, and the other retorted:

"Don't get your hair off, grandma," and both burst into whole-hearted fits of giggles.

Two lusty young animals they were, mill girls by the look of them, bent on enjoying every moment of their freedom and fiercely resentful of criticism.

"Daddy, why isn't there any water in the harbour?"

"Because the tide's out." Daddy lit a cigarette whose only merit was the coupon in each packet.

"Why is the tide out?"

"Do you want to see the whale?" countered

Daddy adroitly, sacrificing sixpence to save his threatened prestige.

"Ooh, yes. Ra—ther. I bet it doesn't half stink."

"Half a minute, Henry," said the fat woman. "Look at that there notice," and she pointed to a placard, "Last Day," pinned on the wall of the tent.

"Well, woterbout it?" demanded Henry.

His wife stepped forward and talked to the girl in the pay-box for a moment. Then she returned and spoke to Henry in a confidential tone:

"Leave it till to-morrer."

"What's the good of leaving it till to-morrer if to-day's the last day? The kid wants to see it, doesn't he?"

"They're going to take it to Manchester to-morrer," explained the fat woman.

"Well, we aren't going to Manchester," objected her duller witted husband.

"They'll have to take the tent down, won't they, to get it out? If you bring our John Willie then he can see it for nowt."

CHAPTER XIII

OUT TO SEA

PUNCTUALLY at six o'clock the next morning Wayland Harrison emerged from his hotel. He had bought a cheap alarm-clock the previous evening, for he was a heavy sleeper and the hotel had no night porter. A bottle of beer was stuffed into each pocket of his Burberry, and a brown paper bag containing food for the day was suspended from two fingers of his right hand. Tucked under his arm was a Thermos flask, filled with tea by the chambermaid the night before.

It was almost dark but rapidly growing lighter, and the wind was distinctly cold. He shut the door with his disengaged hand, locked it and pushed the key underneath, in accordance with the stipulations of the landlady. So far he looked a thoroughly respectable and law-abiding citizen, albeit shabbily dressed and early abroad. Stowed away in his breast pocket, however, was a thing which the respectable citizen rarely carries—a long, narrow canvas bag filled with just the right amount of sand

to make it an exceedingly formidable weapon. Harrison pulled his muffler more closely round his neck and set off at a good pace down the slope of the Esplanade. Its beautifully kept lawns and flower-beds were almost invisible, for very few lamps were lit, but the white painted stone of the lodging-houses and hotels showed up well in the dim light and made the pavement easy to follow.

In the distance across the bay the two red lanterns of the newly rebuilt lighthouse shone out sharp and clear. Beyond them he could just see the white fringe of breaking waves which marked the huge concrete curve of the Marine Drive. Here, where formerly the never-ending battle of the sea and land raged for centuries, the crumbling cliffs are now protected for all time by a man-made monolith, skilfully curved and cunningly smoothed so that the waves have no chance to destroy it with their mighty and patient power. Here, far out in the sea at the extreme end of Castle Hill, where formerly there was nothing but a barren waste of rocks and disintegrating cliffs, is now a prosaic parking ground for chars-à-bancs, which disgorge hordes of brightly clad Yorkshire weavers for their annual feast holidays. Just where the smooth concrete surface merges into the rough-stepped, weather-worn stone of the old pier is an amusement park, a flimsy structure of match-boarding and roof-

ing felt, admirably situated to lure money from the pockets of the new arrivals.

Harrison descended the steps into the Valley and crossed under the Spa bridge on to the Foreshore Road, which runs at sea level round the bay as far as the harbour. It was almost deserted at this hour. Scarborough was asleep. The yellow brick bulk of the Grand Hotel stood out lightless and dead. A solitary fisherman was going towards the harbour on the opposite pavement, his rubber thigh boots softly clumping as he walked.

Harrison followed the seaward footpath as being the inner and shorter side of the curve. His food supplies were becoming uncomfortably heavy to carry, and the beer bottles bumped unpleasantly against his legs as he walked.

The tide had just begun to ebb, leaving a yeasty froth on the twenty-yard strip of uncovered sand. Legions of hungry seagulls were noisily hunting for food at the water's edge, for by this time the light was fairly good. As Harrison drew nearer to the harbour he passed two builders' motor-lorries which had been backed on to the beach and were being filled with sand from its inexhaustible store. Apart from these exceptions the amateur fisherman had the whole foreshore to himself until he arrived at the fish pier. Here a refreshment stall proprietor was engaged in getting his wares ready for the early

boatmen, and the pleasant smell of hot coffee drifted across the road to remind Harrison with forcible abruptness that he had not yet breakfasted.

At last he reached the offices of the Tyne and Tees Shipping Company, which was the agreed meeting place. Thankfully he dumped his burdens on the ground and lighted a cigarette. Just opposite were huge piles of herring boxes and crab-pots, and, with blatant incongruity, a houp-la stall and a sixpence-a-ride motor skooter—the vital business of food production mixed with and almost swamped by the frothiest of idle amusements. A drifting haze of smoke floated across from the funnels of the trawlers in harbour, and Harrison turned round. Behind him the grim, battlemented walls of the old Castle stood out, clear-cut in their stark utility, against a background of indigo clouds. What an eye for sites these old builders possessed! The walls were magnificently impregnable to old-time warfare. High up on the summit of the hill they stood, safeguarded by the sea on three sides and commanding an uninterrupted view over land and water for miles in every direction. Harrison knew a little of the history of the place, and the walls, vast as they were, did not impress him so much as the scanty remains of the little Roman signal station at the extreme end of the cliff. The previous day he had heaved his ponderous weight

up the steep slope—and he hated climbing—in order to visit the latter, for he never missed a chance of seeing Roman relics. The most enjoyable holiday he had ever spent was the fortnight during which he had followed Hadrian's Wall from end to end.

The mass of mediæval ruins recalled to his mind only the siege of the nonentity Piers Gaveston by some utterly unimportant barons. The few traces of Roman masonry, brought to light by the German bombardment and subsequently by the spade of the excavator, bore witness to far more important events—to the days when the Empire of the World was crashing down into decay and dissolution and the Saxon pirates swarmed across to her outlying island province, bringing with them, so it seemed, nothing but destruction and murder. Harrison could visualize the last despairing fight of the Roman sentries who went down in the gallant effort to hold their signal station for the Empire which could no longer help them—none of them would see aught but final and complete disaster in the last fatal onrush of the barbarians. They could never know that their deaths signalized the welding together of Romans and Saxons into a new race and the birth of a new Empire which should overshadow their own.

Wayland Harrison felt strangely peaceful and contented as he smoked his cigarette on the fish pier. The gentle, monotonous song of the wind in the

trawlers' rigging was soothing and restful, and the prospect of a day in Marston's company disturbed him not at all. If the chance he was waiting for came to-day, well and good. If not, the trip would probably be useful in some way or another. Almost certainly he would learn something which might be of use on some future expedition. In any case he was going to have an enjoyable outing, even if he could not combine business with pleasure. Few men had less conscience than Harrison, who could mix archæological meditations and thoughts of murder with the greatest ease.

There was a swish of tyres and a squeal of brakes and a car slid round the corner, to park itself opposite the Scarborough Pure Ice and Cold Storage, Ltd. The side lamps went out, the door swung open and Marston emerged, looking bigger and bulkier than ever in a thick pilot cloth coat. He blew on his fingers and stamped his feet violently.

"Morning, Harrison. Bit parky, isn't it? Had to drive with the windscreen open too. The rod box is too long for the car. Give me a hand out with the things, there's a good chap."

He knelt on the footboard and carefully pulled out a big box from the back seat. Harrison helped him to lift it down. He then took hold of the end of a long, narrow wooden case which protruded through the open windscreen.

"Just ease it up a bit and take the weight, so that it doesn't scratch anything."

Harrison followed his instructions, and the six-foot box was safely decanted on to the pavement.

"I didn't know you wanted all this paraphernalia," said Harrison, the inexperienced, as he saw the size and weight of the fishing-tackle.

"Good heavens, man, what do you think we use to catch fish weighing quarter of a ton? A bit of string and a bent pin? That's the lot, anyway, except for my food and oilskins."

There are certain conventions in all trades and professions. For example, all boxing rings are festooned with red, white and blue, presumably to camouflage or compensate for the depressing fact that Britain, the home of boxing, has not held a world's championship for many years. Similarly, all fishermen and boatmen wear blue jerseys.

A blue jerseyed figure came round the corner of the Harbour Commissioners' office with the slow, unhurried walk peculiar to fishermen and farmers, whose living depends upon tides and seasons, which cannot be speeded up by modern methods.

"That you, Bill?" queried Marston.

"Yes, sir."

"Got the bait?"

"Yes, sir. Quarter of a cran. It's all ready in the boat."

"Right-oh. Let's get these things in. By the way, Harrison, this is Bill Price, one of the best fishermen in Scarborough."

Bill grinned his acknowledgment, and the three men carried their baggage—it needed two journeys—to the top of a vertical iron ladder let into the harbour side of the pier wall.

"Shall I tak' the rod oot?" inquired Bill, who was carrying the long, thin case.

"No, we'll leave it in the box, in case it comes on to rain. It's a new one, and I want to take care of it."

"Right you are, sir. See that coble over there, sir? The 'Silver Queen'?"

"Yes."

"They're going oot tunny fishing as well. Tom Jennings told me he was taking a chap who's never been oot before."

"I hope he doesn't have beginner's luck, then, and steal our fish."

"Plenty of room for both of us, sir."

Piece by piece the fishing-tackle and food was carefully lowered down the ladder and transferred across the slippery decks of a couple of Lowestoft drifters which lay side by side against the dock wall.

The drifters seemed to have grown, both in size and dignity, during the night. The rising tide had

lifted them so that their wheelhouses were level with the pier instead of the tops of their funnels, and they had lost the dead, uncanny stillness of ships resting helplessly on the mud. The inflow of water had infused vitality into them, and they rubbed their fat sides eagerly against the timber piles of the quayside as a dog rubs against its master's leg.

"Straight across, sir," directed Bill, stretching out a warning arm just in time to prevent Harrison stepping on to a slippery fish head.

The motor-coble, "Pictondale," was heaving gently up and down alongside the outermost drifter, and once more the boxes and bags were handed down to a lower level. Marston and Harrison scrambled over the sides of the drifter and jumped into the coble, followed by Bill. The two other members of the crew, steersman and engineman, were already on board.

"Start her up, Jim, and let's get oot before them other chaps."

The man addressed doubled himself up and disappeared from view. A sound of energetic handle-turning was followed by the steady, soft beat of a big twin-cylindered engine and the bubbling splash of its exhaust. The third man took up the wooden tiller bar and slipped the slot of it on to the rudder. Bill cast off the ropes which tied the

"Pictondale" to the drifter and threw them down on to the bottom boards.

The beat of the engine quickened and the black hull of the drifter seemed to slide quietly away from them. The nose of the boat swung out towards the harbour mouth, and in a couple of minutes the lighthouse was left behind and the "Pictondale" was clear of the sheltering piers and out in the bay. The sun was above the horizon, and a broad yellow ribbon of light shimmered across the restless surface of the sea like a straight ruled pathway with crinkled edges.

Marston leaned against the engine casing and stared out to sea. Harrison settled himself securely in his seat and braced his feet up against the side of the boat, which was now rolling and pitching in the swell which came round the headland from the north. The sea was not nearly so calm as it had appeared when viewed from the foreshore. For the first time he began to look round and see what manner of craft this was to which he had entrusted himself. It looked small, ridiculously so, to venture out into the open sea, although as a matter of fact it was thirty-five feet long and weighed upwards of two tons. He was somewhat reassured, however, as he noticed the stoutness and solidity of its wooden ribs and sides and felt the buoyant lift of it as it rose and dipped to the swell of the waves.

The bows were high out of the water, so high that the helmsman, in his little cubby-hole behind the engine, had to stand up to see over them. This struck Harrison as curious. He had seen pictures of speedboats with their noses out of the water and daylight showing under their keels, but not by any stretch of the imagination could the "Pictondale" be called speedy. She was moving, Harrison judged, at a fast walking pace and no more, and yet the tilt was pronounced. He stepped forward over a couple of seats and leaned over the side. The mystery was solved at a glance. The bows were well out of the water, not because they had risen, for the rounded nose of the keel was clearly visible deep down under the surface, but because they were built high. The sloping curve of the bulwarks was there always, and was not, as in the speedboat, a temporary feature due to a lifting of the keel. Marston saw what he was looking at and broke his long silence.

"Built very high at the bows, aren't they?" he observed. "That's why they are such rattling good sea boats. They use them all through the winter, you know, for crab-pots and line fishing."

Harrison didn't know, but he was very glad to hear it. If they were safe boats in winter they were certainly safe on a fairly calm day in early September.

"Hello, there's the other chap coming out of the harbour," went on Marston. "We've got a quarter of a mile start of him, at any rate. Not that it matters, really."

The "Pictondale" was about eight feet in beam at its widest part and could have comfortably carried a much larger party. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say "could have easily carried," for comfort of any sort is completely absent in an open coble. The bow thwart, or what the landsman would call the front seat, was provided with a hole through which a mast could be rigged if necessary. Behind this there were four more thwarts, and then came the little deck over the engine. Further aft still were two more seats, mostly occupied by spare tins of petrol and a drum of engine oil. In the midst of these stood the helmsman. The sliding cover of the engine casing was open, and the mechanic's head and shoulders protruded through the hatch into the fresh air. The tiny compartment below was hot and smelly, and nearly filled by the engine and the engineer's legs. Spare corners were taken up by oil cans, greasy rags, spanners and the usual garage litter. Two inches of black, oily water washed lazily backwards and forwards under the engine.

On the little deck above rested the sole navigational instrument—a toy binnacle of galvanized

iron, with a rickety oil-lamp for night use tied on to its side with string. The mast, with a wedge for fixing it, was lying along the thwarts, together with a pair of enormous oars of the heavy, clumsy type used by fishing-boats. They had exceedingly narrow blades spliced on to handles made from four by two inch planking and were each provided with a ring to hook over a wooden pin in the bulwarks, which effectively discouraged any fancy oarsmanship. Neither mast nor oars were used so long as the engine was in good working order. A spare tiller and a sail in a canvas bag lay on the bottom boards underneath, together with a couple of cork lifebelts. Bill Price was a careful owner and kept his boat clean and smart. Outside she was painted red, with a narrow yellow stripe. Inside, the colour scheme was pink, with the oars, mast and thwarts picked out in brown.

A large basket of herring stood in the middle of the boat—four baskets go to the cran of about a thousand fish.

"Why do you want so many?" asked Harrison, dolefully anticipating a whole afternoon spent in skewering scores of herrings on to hooks.

"Ground bait," replied Bill briefly. "Tunnies isn't frightened of boats, and if you see one you can keep it near you by throwing herrings oot."

By this time the "Pictondale" was about a mile

from shore, and the steady beat of her engine was driving her out to sea at about six knots. Marston looked back over his shoulder and saw the whole sweep of the South Bay, with the white line of the Foreshore Road running round it like a curved surgical needle.

A great black cloud passed slowly overhead, and its shadow drifted over the old houses near the harbour and faded the warm redness of their tiled roofs. The white War Memorial on Oliver's Mount stood out in sharp silhouette against it. A few hundred yards away the high stem of the "Silver Queen" splashed through the water in their wake. Tied to the stern of each coble was a rowing-boat, which staggered along in a drunken dance to the stretch and pull of the tow-rope. The cloud passed and the sun came out again with dazzling brightness.

"I'm feeling hungry," observed Harrison, reaching for his Thermos, which had been stowed, for safety, on the sail bag.

"Right. Carry on," said Marston. "I had some bacon and eggs before I started. I think I'll get the tackle ready."

Harrison unwrapped a packet of sandwiches and poured out strong tea into the tin cup of the flask. The hot liquid was very welcome, for early morning on the sea is generally cold, and Harrison's clothes

were a makeshift lot. He was wearing a cardigan over his waistcoat, a *suède* golf jacket on top of this, an ordinary coat and a Burberry. In default of sea boots or oilskins, his grey flannel trousers were covered by the thin mackintosh slip-on overalls which usually lived in the pocket of his golf bag.

Marston unstrapped his long box and began to fit together the two sections of his rod. It was very short, only about six feet long when the butt had been joined to the rod proper. Even Harrison's unpractised eye at once noticed the beauty of its magnificent craftsmanship. It was made of strips of split cane, cut, spliced and fitted together round a steel core with such microscopic accuracy that it was impossible to detect a single joint upon its polished, hexagonal surface. Its thickness tapered gently from the gunmetal reel fittings and white felt handle to the end ring with its double pulleys, but even at its tip it was as thick as a man's little finger. At short intervals down its length metal rings were lashed on, each ring lined with smoothly polished agate in order to lessen the wear on the line which passed through them, and each ring fitted with a guard to protect the delicate bearing surface.

Marston next produced a leather case from the other box and extracted from it his precious reel, which he fastened to the rod by means of powerful

locking rings. It was a huge, heavy thing, capable of carrying five hundred yards of strong line.

"How much do you think this chap cost?" inquired Marston.

"Oh, I don't know. Two or three pounds, I should think. It looks a good one."

"Two or three pounds? For a Zane Grey reel made by Hardy's? Help! It cost thirty. Have a look at it, man, for the love of Mike."

He handed it over, and Harrison was forced to admit that his guess had wildly underestimated its value. It was made of a silvery rustless alloy which was immune from corrosion by damp air or sea water; made to standards of engineering precision. The line drum ran in frictionless ball bearings, the winding handle drove it through enclosed gear wheels with a ratio of two to one so that line could be reeled in rapidly, and the handle incorporated a free-wheel clutch so that the user might not be endangered by its revolutions when the line was suddenly pulled off the reel by a fish. A little thumb lever enabled the angler to run out line rapidly or to apply a ratchet check, and in addition to this there were two brakes. One was an immensely powerful affair worked by a screw-down wheel handle, the other was a simpler but still effective hinged flap of thick hide, which was pressed down upon the revolving drum with the thumbs. The

whole thing was reminiscent of a motor-car in its sturdy complexity, and, like a car, had to be lubricated with a special grease gun. Harrison passed it back to its owner.

"Yes, there's more in this than there seems to be," he admitted. "Good Lord! What next?"

Marston had leaned his rod on the herring basket and produced from the box a large sheet of thick brown leather, from which dangled and jingled a complicated assortment of straps, swivels, buckles and spring hooks.

"This is the harness," he explained. "It is quite impossible to hold the rod in your hands when playing a fish. The strain is far too great. So you wear this." As he spoke he put the sheet of leather on his back, which it fitted, like the backplate of a suit of armour. Two strong straps passed over his shoulders like braces, and two more came round under the arms to hook on to them.

"These shoulder straps are fixed on to lugs in the reel casing by these spring hooks," he went on. "Catalina harness, it's called. Now we want the brace."

Again he rummaged in the box and produced two double-ended hooks with turnbuckles in their middles.

"These fasten across from the rod to the reel

to brace it up against the pull of the harness and to prevent it being torn off the rod."

"I see," said Harrison, who was beginning to find this complicated sport rather absorbing. "You hold the rod in your hands and have the harness to help you."

"Not exactly," replied Marston. "Haven't you seen our chair?" He pointed to the bows of the coble, where a revolving office armchair rested on the coiled up anchor rope.

"I saw it and wondered what the devil it was doing there, but I didn't know it was anything to do with the fishing. I thought perhaps Bill was doing a bit of furniture removing in his spare time."

"What we do," went on Marston, screwing up the turnbuckles of the van Brunt brace, "is to put the chair into the dinghy and screw it down on to a framework that we've fixed up there. In the middle of the front of the seat is a gunmetal socket with a universal joint. You sit in the chair and put the butt end of the rod into the socket between your legs. Then fasten your harness on to the reel, and there you are."

"I see. What are those bamboo poles for?"

In the rod box were three stout bamboos fitted with brass ferrules, carefully plugged in order to keep the joints free from sand.

"Those fit together to make a long rod, and you

use it to hold out the bait to the fish. You see, with the chair socket and harness and a damned big heavy reel you can't do any fancy bait casting."

Marston released the capstan brake on his reel and threaded the line through the agate lined guide rings.

"Got to fix on the trace and hook next."

"What's a trace?"

"This." He held up a twenty-foot length of steel wire cable attached by a swivel to a murderous looking fish-hook four inches long. "Wire is used so that the fish can't break it with his tail." Marston lashed the trace on to the end of his line with a rawhide coupling.

"The line doesn't look very strong," commented Harrison, running it through his fingers.

"It's fifty-four thread Cuttyhunk, and it takes a pull of over a hundred pounds to break it. I think you've just about seen everything now. Oh, no, you haven't. Here's the gaff."

Out of the rod box came its remaining contents, two stout pieces of hickory which screwed together to form a six-foot pole with a bronze socket at one end. From the other box Marston brought out a huge steel hook with a bayonet point and razor-sharp edges.

"This fits into the socket on the shaft," he said, "and you tie the two together with a piece of

string. The rope is fastened on to the hook of the gaff. When you've got your fish close in at the end of the fight the boatman leans over and sticks him. The string breaks and the hook comes off the handle. Then you can haul on the rope as you like. It was rather funny, the first time I hooked a fish; Bill here stood by with the gaff—both the tunny and I were nearly dead by that time—and when he got a chance he stuck it in good and hearty. The handle came off in his hands, as it's meant to do, and you should have seen Bill's face! 'Hell,' he said, 'I've missed the b——!'"

Bill grinned rather sheepishly and busied himself with the bait basket.

Harrison was examining the cruel hook of the gaff, when suddenly there was a crash. It had slipped out of his hands and dropped on to a bottle of beer. Marston, quite unconcerned, for it was not his beer, picked up the fragments of glass and threw them overboard.

"There's one thing about the sea," he observed philosophically. "You can throw your bottles into it without being called a litter lout."

It was now about nine o'clock and Scarborough was miles astern. No details of the town could be seen, but the square end of Castle Hill stood out boldly and easily recognizable. It reminded Harrison of certain tuckshop delicacies of his schooldays

known as "rainbow cakes." The grass-covered summit of the promontory was green; below this was a deeper layer of brown, which indicated the steep, rocky clay of the cliff face, and at the bottom was the narrow greyish ribbon of the Marine Drive, which gradually grew thinner every moment and shortly dropped out of sight altogether below the horizon.

It was now raining a little and the wind was freshening. Marston put on his oilskins and a sou'wester, and his companion turned up the collar of his Burberry. The "Pictondale" was driving straight into the wind, bound for an irregular line of trawlers which were strung out across the sea right ahead, and at each plunge her dumpy sides came down with a squattering splash and threw out diverging waves of white foam. Six trawlers and a couple of tramp steamers were congregated within a mile of her, for she was now well into the first lane of shipping traffic. The steersman, without waiting for instructions, leaned on his tiller and headed for the nearest trawler.

"Just in time," said Bill. "She's starting to haul."

CHAPTER XIV

BIG GAME FISHING

SERGEANT LEVERTON looked exceedingly miserable as the coble "Silver Queen" glided between the piers and out into the bay.

"No true fisherman looks like that at the beginning of a day's sport," observed Drury.

"H'm, I'm not a true fisherman. If I can keep my breakfast down I don't care two hoots about catching anything," retorted the sergeant.

He was wearing old clothes and was nominally the hirer of the boat and the leader of the expedition. Drury was posing as one of the crew. In real life detectives rarely resort to disguises, and, when they do, they favour simple ones which depend for success on their unexpectedness. The inspector was wearing borrowed sea boots and a blue jersey. A sou'wester and two days' growth of beard completed his disguise.

Marston and Harrison both knew him by sight and would have recognized him at once in his ordinary clothes, but he was quite certain that he would

pass unnoticed as a fisherman. Moreover, he did not propose to come to close quarters with them.

"We don't know anything about this job," he said to the owner of the "Silver Queen." "You'll have to tell us what to do."

Mr. Jennings took off his cap and wiped his nose with it.

"Ay, I can do that," he conceded. "'Appen you'll not need much telling." He looked downwards as he spoke, and his gaze rested reflectively upon a dozen bottles of beer stowed in the coils of the anchor rope.

Drury had brought them because he guessed that, judiciously expended, they would smooth away any difficulties that might arise and secure willing co-operation from the crew. Mr. Jennings' tribute to his common sense showed that he had reasoned correctly.

The inspector opened the haversack which contained his food, and brought out some apples.

"Have one?" he asked.

Mr. Jennings pointed to his false teeth and shook his head. Drury reached over for a bottle of beer and handed it to him.

"Do they stop you drinking that?"

"Sir, they do not."

Further supplies were handed over to the engine

room department and the helmsman, and cordial relations were at once established.

"Keep the rest of it away from Sam," advised Mr. Jennings. Sam was the mechanic.

"You can't keep beer away from Sam," interposed the steersman.

Sam said nothing. He was a strong, silent man; also, his mouth was otherwise engaged.

When Mr. Jennings had finished his breakfast and thrown the bottle over the side, he put together the tackle and strapped Sergeant Leverton into his harness.

"It's a chancy business, this," he said. "We was oot a fortnight ago, and we went roond to nearly all the trawlers as far doon as Filey and never saw a thing. And the only one we missed had tunny roond her. Still, things is better now and nearly every boat's reporting them, so we ought to see some."

"What use are they when you've caught them?" queried the practical sergeant.

"It's a good job you didn't ask an angler that question. It'd be like—like ——"

"Like asking a golfer if they grow any vegetables on the links at St. Andrews," suggested Drury.

"Ay. There is one gentleman who wants to commercialize it—the last fish he caught weighed five hundred and sixty poonds, and it sold in the

market for eightpence a poond—but most of them don't like it."

"I don't see why not."

"They say it'll spoil the sport and start the big boats harpooning them. What aboot getting into the boat now, sir?" added Jennings, preparing to haul in the tow-rope of the dinghy.

"What? In there?" ejaculated Leverton, staring at the heaving bows of the tiny craft. "Can't I fish from here if I've got a fish?"

"Well, you can, sir. They generally uses a dinghy, though, because it's much quicker to handle. When a fish takes the line oot you can get a dinghy under way to get the strain off much better than the big boat. And there's no propeller to bother aboot. And a fish can tow the dinghy withoot breaking your line. Sometimes they tow you for miles."

"Do they? Then that settles it. I'm stopping here. That is, if you don't mind, sir?"

"Doesn't matter to me," said Drury. "So long as you play at being a fisherman it doesn't matter about the finer points."

A cargo tramp crossed the bows of the "Silver Queen" slowly and sedately, a trail of smoke spreading in front of her in the following wind. Mr. Jennings altered course towards the south, and the rolling movement of the coble at once began to diminish, much to Leverton's satisfaction. A couple of hundred yards away lay the Yarmouth trawler "Snowdrift," with the "Pictondale" in close attendance. Marston's patent chair had been transferred to the dinghy, but he himself was waiting until a fish was seen before getting into her.

A cloud of white steam went up from the "Snowdrift's" escape pipe, and filmy wisps of vapour oozed from the winch in front of the wheelhouse. The clatter of its revolving wheels could be heard as the winchman threw in his gear.

"If you get near the other coble," said Drury to Jennings, "you might give them to understand that we're not particular whether we stay out here or go home. We don't want it to look as if we're anxious to keep near them."

Mr. Jennings nodded. The trawler was now about thirty yards ahead.

"Stop her, Sam," he said.

The beat of the engine died away and the "Silver Queen" lost way rapidly.

The winch was hauling in two wire ropes which ran over pulleys in the ∩ shaped davits or gallases, and thence straight down into the sea as taut as iron rods. Half a dozen men leaned over the side in readiness to pull in the trawl net when it came to the surface.

"Seen any tunny?" yelled Marston from the "Pictondale."

The skipper of the trawler leaned his head out of the wheelhouse and spat untidily to windward.

"No," he bawled. "T'others have, though."

The two cobles bobbed up and down ten yards away from the rusty red side of the "Snowdrift," and Jennings began to throw herrings overboard. Marston followed his example.

"Now's the time to keep your eyes open, sir," he directed. "If there are any aboot you'll see 'em when the trawl comes up."

A dozen seagulls wheeled overhead, wistfully watching the herrings as they sank out of sight between the boats. The clanking of the winch continued, and the aftermost otter board came up out of the water. It was followed in a moment by its fellow, and the hissing of steam round the winch died away as the winchman shut his throttle. The two boards hung suspended from the gallases, and between them dangled the head-line and ground-rope. The latter had threaded upon it scores of wooden rollers which ran along the sea bottom when the net was towed during trawling. The former was festooned with glass and iron floats, the buoyancy of which lifted it off the bottom and kept the mouth of the net open like a huge bag when in use.

The crew of the trawler spat on their hands and began to haul in the weed encrusted net. Narrower and narrower grew the triangular bag of it as

it was hauled in. Shining, silvery forms came into view above water and slipped back into the cod-end or extremity of the net at the next pull from above. At last the cod-end itself began to emerge from the sea, and the crew stopped hauling. A rope was passed round the bulging bag and slipped over the hook at the end of a wire warp which ran up to a block in the foremast. Thence it ran to the winch, where it was taken once or twice round the drum and the free end held by a fat man with a clay pipe. More clanking and steam clouds from the winch. The drum revolved and the fat man took up the slack as the cod-end came out of the water. It swung forward, bumping along the rusty plating of the "Snowdrift's" starboard side until it came to rest directly opposite the mast. The winch redoubled its efforts and up went the cod-end until it swung inboard over the bulwarks, torrents of water streaming from it as it hung in the air.

"Whoa!" shouted the skipper.

The winch stopped with a wheeze.

"Do you mean to say," said Drury, addressing no one in particular, "that we've come all this way out to sea to hear the captain shout 'Whoa'? He might at least have said 'Belay' or 'Avast' or something nautical."

An oilskinned figure ran forward and shook a shower of seaweed off the suspended cod-end. It

then untied the rope which closed the lower extremity of the bag. A glittering cascade of fish descended on to the deck, the rope was retied and the net swung overboard again.

"Yon's a good catch, Charlie," yelled Mr. Jennings.

"Ay, but there's a lot of muck in it," replied the trawler skipper.

Marston was still hopefully throwing herrings out.

"Beastly things sink so soon," he grumbled. "If they floated on the top the tunny would at least have to come up for them. Where are those beer bottle corks?"

Bill Price passed them over, and Marston wedged a cork into the gills of each herring before he threw it over. There was no result, except that several seagulls earned an unexpectedly easy meal.

"Let's go on board," he suggested.

Bill brought the "Pictondale" alongside the trawler, and Marston, Bill and Harrison scrambled up and disappeared.

"Like to go too?" said Drury.

"Yes," replied Leverton. "I've never been on a trawler."

The inspector handed over two bottles of beer.

"Put these in your pocket," he said, "and don't bring 'em back."

The "Silver Queen" ran alongside and Leverton climbed out of her. Drury sat so that his sou'wester obscured his face.

The sergeant got down on to the wet, littered deck and joined the group of men standing round the catch. A huge heap of fish lay there—hake, plaice and mackerel, and many others which Leverton could not recognize. There were crabs scuttling and rattling on the wooden planking, lobsters with their menacing claws opening and shutting, skates with their deformed, squashed bodies, and a few dogfish.

"What's that?" asked Leverton, pointing out a fine looking fish to a man sitting on a herring box mending nets with a wooden needle.

"Codling," was the reply, and the fisherman drew a knife from his pocket. Picking up the fish, still living, he slit it down the front. Ripping open the stomach he held it out to the horrified sergeant. The fish, with the impotent helplessness of a creature without limbs, gave no more than a feeble flap of its tail.

"See that? That's full of herring spawn. The herrings have been and gone again. That's why we're not getting any now. There'll be another shoal along later. The Frenchmen got two thousand boxes near Aberdeen last week."

He tossed the gasping, disembowelled fish care-

lessly on to the deck and resumed his netting. Other men were sorting the fish. They trod on them, threw them down, ripped them open to read the omens and forecast the future fishing. The deck was slippery with slimy scales, guts and feebly flapping bodies. Cold, expressionless eyes stared at Leverton from thousands of dying fish. Gasping mouths and heaving gills everywhere struggled for the oxygen which was there but which they could not use. The deck was littered with baskets, nets, floats, warps, shovels, trawl boards, shelving boards and hose pipe.

The orderly soul of Sergeant Leverton revolted at the untidy brutality of it, and he longed to get back to the calm peacefulness of the coble.

He turned to his informant again and produced the beer which he had brought with him.

"Could we have a bit of fresh bait, do you think?"

"Ay, that you can."

The man dropped his netting needle and seized a tin scoop. Assisted by the skipper, who arrived with masterly presence of mind as soon as he saw the red triangles on the bottles, he rapidly filled a basket with fish and lowered it down into the coble. Mr. Jennings emptied it and threw the basket back.

"Chuck us a bit of plaice for tea, Charlie," he shouted.

The skipper's head disappeared, and in a few seconds about eight shillings' worth of plaice flew through the air and landed with a damp flop on the engine casing. Leverton climbed back into the "Silver Queen" and marvelled at the value of ale in the North Sea.

"What was second and third in the Leger?" bawled Charlie.

Sam opened his mouth and his lips moved, but the reply was lost in the roar of escaping steam.

"If there'd been any tunny aboot we should have seen 'em," shouted Tom Jennings in Drury's ear. "Start her up, Sam." He began to bore holes in the tails of his plaice with a penknife.

"Are we going on to another trawler now?" asked Drury.

"Yes. Goo astern, Sam."

The reverse gear whined and the coble backed slowly away from the "Snowdrift," the helmsman steering with one hand and holding the dinghy clear of the propeller with the other. Fifty yards to starboard the "Pictondale" was already under way, her high bows giving her some resemblance to a miniature lifeboat.

Mr. Jennings tied ropes through the tails of his fish and threw them overboard, one at each side, to dance and trail through the water as they were towed along.

"What's the idea?" asked Leverton.

"It eats more tenderer. Washes all the slime off."

"Did the other chaps get some bait as well?" asked Drury. "I didn't see it if they did."

"Na-ow," drawled Sam with emphasis. "They won't part with a pint. I know yon big chap. He's t'meanest b—— in t'North Sea."

"I wish this damned Cook's tour would stop following us," Marston was saying at that moment.

"We might as well have the boat in the bloody bathing pool for all the room we've got," agreed Bill Price. "Still, 'appen they'll go home soon. Tom Jennings told me he didn't want to stay oot long, and wanted to know how long we was stopping. Asked me to give him a signal if we was going in."

"Slack devil!" said Marston. "He gets his money. Why can't he give the chap good value for it? Wants to go home for a football match, I suppose, and calls himself a fisherman! Don't you give him any signals, Bill."

The unfortunate Mr. Jennings' reputation was suffering severely from his loyalty to Drury's requirements.

"No, I won't, sir. I told him to go roond the trawlers and find some fish instead of hanging on to us and bleating aboot going home." Mr. Price's

code of professional honour was a high one, and he was amazed and distressed at his colleague's lapse.

The engine began to spit and misfire.

"Running out of petrol?" suggested Marston.

"No. Dirty plug, I should think. We needn't stop her to clean it. He cleans 'em when she's running."

Sure enough the asbestos fingered mechanic was removing one of the plugs, while the big, docile twelve horse engine continued to tick over on one cylinder. In a couple of minutes all was well again and the "Pictondale" gathered speed and bore down upon the next trawler.

The "Merline" of Whitby was exactly like the "Snowdrift," and all other trawlers for that matter, except for her colour. She was, or rather had been, painted green, and her black funnel was decorated with two white bands. A jet of steam shot from the side of it, and the penetrating howl of her siren followed.

"What's that for?" said Marston, jumping up excitedly. "Does that mean she's seen one?"

"No, I don't think so, sir. Perhaps his trawl's stuck and he wants that Icelander to pass him on the other side."

The big Iceland boat duly altered course as requested and passed safely clear of the trawl ropes.

The " Silver Queen " approached the trawler's stern and passed almost under it.

" What time d'you haul? " yelled Mr. Jennings.

" In aboot quarter of an hoor," was the shouted reply.

" We'd better wait. Aise t'ingine doon a bit, Sam."

Sam throttled right down, and the coble kept level with the slow pace of the trawler.

" Have you got owt? " went on Jennings.

" No; we only come away last night. We've got aboot twenty-five baskets so far. How's ' Snowdrift ' done? "

" Oh, she got a hundred and fifty boxes in three days. Seen any tunny? "

" Yes, three or four."

" When, to-day? "

" Ay, last time we hauled."

The sharp iron stem of the trawler loomed up above their heads, and the white painted depth scale rose and fell as the waves slid past. Six feet to ten feet—ten feet to six feet. Up and down the scale went the water line.

" Stop her, Sam."

The gentle bubbling of the exhaust died away altogether, and the " Silver Queen " dropped astern as the trawler moved slowly on. Sam disappeared below the engine cover and made intermittent clinking noises with a spanner. The helmsman unshipped his tiller and produced bread and cheese and cold beef.

As the pull of the tow-rope slackened the dinghy drifted round from the stern to the side of the coble and finally to the bows. Tom Jennings pushed her off with the boathook; but she drifted back again, so he got into her and sculled away with one oar to the full stretch of the tow-rope. Then he settled himself comfortably in the stern, tilted his cap over his face and closed his eyes.

Drury and Leverton, seeing that there was nothing else to do, opened their haversacks and began to eat.

" How far are we out now? " asked Drury.

" Aboot ten or twelve mile, sir," replied the helmsman indistinctly, by reason of a mouthful of bread and beef.

" How deep is it? " inquired Leverton, looking over the side at the grey water.

" Perhaps twenty-seven or eight fathom."

Time passed on for another ten minutes until Drury broke the silence:

" How's the enemy? "

" Twenty-five past," said Leverton.

" 'Bout time we got started, isn't it? " The trawler was by this time three or four hundred yards ahead.

"Where's Tom?" said the mechanic.

"In the boat." All that was visible of Tom was the sole of one boot. "I think he's asleep—or dead!"

"He'll wakken up when t'tow-rope tightens. Half a minute; this'll do it better."

Sam leaned forward, grabbed a herring out of the bait basket and hurled it through the air. Another and another followed, and many vain repetitions from the dinghy testified to the accuracy of his aim.

The coble arrived back at the "Merline" just at the right moment, for the white banner of steam that betokened hauling broke out as they approached. Jennings hurriedly began to throw herrings overboard.

"What a lot of bait you use," commented Drury. Nearly a third of the basket was gone by this time.

"It's the only way, sir. Once get 'em up and you can keep 'em round you."

The glittering bellies of the ground bait showed up in flashes of silver as they sank below the surface. The steady rattle of the winch went on and the trawl net began to appear out of the water.

"Don't think much of this sort of fishing," grumbled Leverton. "Too much hanging about and doing nothing."

"Hallo, what's that?" exclaimed Jennings.

Excitement reigned in the "Pictondale," twenty yards away. Bill Price had caught sight of something in the water between the coble and the trawl net. He began to throw herrings over as fast as he could. Harrison hauled in the tow-rope hand over hand and climbed into the dinghy, followed by Marston, who wore his harness and carried his rod.

"Looks as if they'd seen something," said Tom. "Quick, some more herrings. Bait the gentleman's hook for him, Sam."

Sam neatly transfixed a herring with the four-inch hook in such a way that the fish would float horizontally in the water and appear as natural as possible.

The "Pictondale" had kept pace with the "Merline" during the waiting period and had not been allowed to drift. When Marston heard that the trawler had actually seen tunny that morning nothing would induce him to leave her. He looked over the straps of his harness, carefully baited his hook and got everything ready.

"Can you row?" he said to Harrison.

"Yes."

"Would you like to come in the dinghy with me, or would you rather stop here?"

"What does the coble do?"

"Just follows the boat about if the fish tows it."

"I'd rather come with you."

"Right-oh."

When Price saw the long-awaited disturbance in the water Marston was frantic with excitement.

"Keep on with the bait, Bill," he said hoarsely. "For Heaven's sake don't let him go."

Bill threw over another fish. There came a rushing swirl of water, a splash and a glimpse of a triangular fin. A huge, glittering blue and silver shape shot past under the surface with incredible speed, and the herring was gone.

Harrison cast off the tow-rope and settled himself at the oars, while Marston slipped the loop of the safety rope over his head and pulled it snugly into position round his waist. He then rested the butt of his rod in its socket and hooked the reel on to his harness.

"Another, Bill."

Again Bill threw a herring, and again that steely flash, under the boat this time. The herring hardly touched the water before it disappeared.

Harrison saw the tunny distinctly as it passed, and gasped with amazement and awe. Never had he imagined such a mighty fish. Fully ten feet long, with immense shoulders and an enormous body tapering gracefully to a sinewy tail, it looked the very incarnation of ruthless power. Like a flash it turned and swept back towards the boat, driven by the unconquerable force of hunger. What a raging

appetite such a mass of muscle must possess, and what quantities of food must be hunted and eaten to supply its majestic bulk with energy. All creatures of the sea carry out to the uttermost farthing the grim law of wild life—eat or be eaten. The tunny, by reason of its size, is more concerned with the first of these requirements, and its whole existence is spent in a restless, never ending search for food. Living food, won by the lightning speed of its onrush, for its stupendous muscles must drive its fifty stone weight through the water fast enough to catch the small and agile herring.

Marston dropped his bait over the side and carefully held it out with the bamboo rod. The tunny saw it, dived and then rushed it. One downward thrash of its tail and the surface of the sea was burst open by its tremendous, glistening shoulders. The herring disappeared and the frothing water subsided with a sullen swirl. Marston dropped the bamboo and clung with both hands to his reel, his thumbs clutching the leather brake to prevent the line overrunning and jamming with the fierce pull that was about to come. He was not an instant too soon. There was a prolonged screech from the ratchet of his reel as the line was torn off at a terrific speed. It whipped out through the agate guide rings and into the water as tight as piano wire.

"Row!" he jerked out hurriedly, for half his line had already gone.

Harrison dug frenziedly at the oars and headed the boat in the direction of the tunny. Marston began to screw down his capstan brake, and the line went out more and more slowly. Finally it stopped altogether and he began to wind in cautiously. The rod tip began to bend and his shoulders felt the drag of the harness and the restraining pull of the safety rope. No use risking breaking the line by putting too much strain on it at this stage, while the fish was yet strong and tireless. He slackened the brake a trifle. The tunny slowed down the fury of his first mad rush and broke surface a hundred yards away.

Marston reeled in the slack as fast as his two to one gear would allow. His arms were beginning to ache already. Suddenly the line shot out again as the fish gave a tremendous jerk. The reel whirred and shrieked, but stood up to its work. It had undergone very severe tests by the makers—six hundred yards of line pulled off it time after time at a speed of sixty miles an hour with the brake screwed down to give twenty pounds pressure. Bearings which could stand such a test were virtually indestructible.

"Give her a touch," said Marston. Harrison began to row, and Marston slowly screwed down his

brake. A few seconds later, "Stop rowing," he directed. "We'll let him tow us a bit and see how he likes that."

Harrison lifted his oar blades out of the water, but the boat went on. The angler's legs were braced hard against the footboards and the rope round his waist creaked as the fresh strain came upon it. The tunny was near the surface, and an occasional splash and eddy bore witness to its ceaseless struggle for freedom—freedom from the dead weight it was towing, freedom from the steel barb in its mouth. Half an hour had gone by since it was hooked, and Marston was dripping with sweat.

"I wish I'd taken some clothes off before I began," he gasped. "Cut this oilskin off, will you?"

"Pity to spoil it. Can't you slip it off?"

"No. How can I with the harness over it? Cut it off."

Harrison took up the open knife which was stuck into the thwart for emergency use in case the line had to be cut and began to slit the oilskin coat down the seams. His thoughts flew to the sandbag in his pocket, and he looked round. The "Pictondale" was close behind, following every twist and turn of the dinghy with interested eyes. He completed the work of destruction and pulled away the remains of the coat from under the harness.

"That's better," said Marston. "Thanks.

You'll have your turn at the rod later—if we ever get this devil landed."

"Good. I'd love to have a go." Harrison had a wild desire to fish. Never before had he felt the least inclination to do so, and he had come on the expedition fully expecting to be bored. But this was a man's job, and the full-blooded vigour of it appealed to him. To pit oneself single-handed against a monster four times the weight of a man, to fight it inch by inch and minute by minute, to control its thunderbolt rushes with a slender thread of flax, to wear down its gigantic vitality by skill and patience and a cunning which overmatched its own—almost he could forgive Marston for introducing him to such a sport. Almost, but not quite. Again he felt a surge of implacable hatred against the man whom he believed had killed Reinold, and more than ever he decided that he must make an end of the matter that very day. He looked at the knife in his hand. No reason why Marston should have a weapon like that handy if it came to a struggle. He dropped it silently into the water and watched it sink. Down, down it went, more and more indistinct until it disappeared altogether. Never again would that knife be of use or menace to anyone.

The boat slowed and stopped. Perhaps the tunny was beginning to weaken. Marston sat back in

his chair and wiped his streaming face. His mouth was dry, his hands blistered. Every muscle in his body was racked with an intolerable ache; he was gasping for breath and his arms were trembling and his legs shaking from the long-drawn strain of the battle. His shirt had worked up round his waist into an uncomfortable roll, his clothes were drenched with sweat, his shoulders were raw from the pull of the harness—and he was absolutely, perfectly happy. Time passed unnoticed, physical discomforts were ignored, all else was forgotten but the thrills and excitements of the moment.

"What a fish!" he exclaimed. "A six hundred pounder at least by the feel of it." He tucked his wet handkerchief back into his pocket, and as he did so his reel shrieked again as it spun round furiously. Down came his thumbs upon the leather brake, but a fraction of a second too late. The tunny, invigorated by its short and deceitful rest, clove the water like a knife and tore the line off the drum so fast that the reel, unbraked, overran itself and the line jammed in a tangle of loops and snarls. There was a jerk and the line tightened and twanged like a bowstring. The powerful steel-centred rod bent like a twig and was pulled right down on to the edge of the boat. Marston, momentarily expecting the rod to snap or the line to

break, was almost weeping with rage at his carelessness. To play a fish for two hours and then to lose it like that—hell, he wasn't fit to catch anything bigger than goldfish.

The rod creaked ominously under the utterly unfair strain, but its costly workmanship was proof against almost anything. Slowly the tip of it rose as the line relaxed, and such was its quality that the curve disappeared at once and it straightened out as true as it was when it left the maker's hands. Evidently the tunny was feeling the effects of the jam and was tired of pulling against the rigid resistance. Marston hastily began to unravel his line while he had the chance. Finally he got the last knot untied and the last kink untwisted and began to wind in the slack. He now had about a hundred and fifty yards out, and the fish appeared to be motionless.

"I'll never be such a damned fool again," he said. "That's the narrowest squeak I've ever had."

The far end of the line swept round in a curve and sank into the water as it slackened. A fin broke surface, travelling rapidly towards the boat. Marston began to wind in frantically, but could hardly keep pace with it. Nearer and nearer it came. Was it going to sink them?

"Look out, man!" shouted Marston. "He's

going under the boat! Turn her round quick or he'll have my rod over the side again!"

With one powerful sweep of his right arm and a frenzied push with his left Harrison spun the little dinghy round as the tunny rushed under the keel. He ducked his head down as the rod and line swung across, and heaved a sigh of relief as the danger passed and the song of the ratchet broke out again. In that last split second as the boat turned round Harrison saw a cold, implacable eye glaring up at him out of the water; saw also a huge scar on the back of the fish, a relic of some long past, grim battle for food or mate in the soft green darkness of the sea.

"Good job we weren't in the coble," commented Marston.

"Why?"

"Well, for one thing we could never have turned her in time. And the line would have got mixed up in the propeller. How long have we been, by the way?"

"Two and three quarter hours."

"Well, he ought to be getting tired soon. I believe he's giving way now. Yes, I'm getting it back bit by bit. Up she comes, but don't let's shout too soon. You never know what's going to happen till you've got him safely gaffed."

Slowly the line came in, with occasional checks

and occasional losses, but the gains were greater —much greater—than the losses. At last, three and a quarter hours after the first mad rush, the rawhide coupling and the top end of the wire trace came into view. The huge body floated up to the surface near the boat. It lay inert, utterly exhausted and very near the end. It seemed to be trying to resist as Marston slowly turned the handle of his reel, but its strength was ebbing fast and the most it could do was to roll over away from the boat. Nearer and nearer it came.

"Get the gaff," croaked Marston hoarsely. His mouth was so parched that he could hardly speak.

Harrison let go his oars thankfully, for his hands were very sore by this time, and picked up his weapon from the bottom boards. He gripped the handle firmly in both hands, glanced up at the shining steel hook to make certain that the point was the right way round. . . .

"Now," shouted Marston.

Down crashed the heavy steel and struck deep into the curved side of the motionless fish. There was a jarring thud and the dinghy shook and quivered from end to end at the impact of the last, dying blow of that massive tail. Harrison fell over backwards with the combined shock of the blow and the sudden detachment of the gaff handle.

A fountain of red-tinged water and foam shot up into the air and came down on him, and for one terrifying moment he thought that the boat had sunk. He scrambled up to find Marston securing the gaff-rope and the "Pictondale" coming alongside. The dinghy was again tied on to the stern of the coble, and the two spent and weary fishermen climbed on board.

"Food, food, for the love of Allah," exclaimed Harrison, and began to eat ravenously. "Aren't you hungry, Marston?" he asked in surprise, seeing that his companion did not immediately begin to eat.

"Yes," was the emphatic reply. "I could eat that tunny easily. But I must get my reel cleaned and oiled first. It won't take long."

"He isn't usually so particular about it," said Bill.

"No," replied Marston, who had overheard the remark. "But last time I took it to Hardy's they told me it was short of oil, so I'm going to treat it better in future."

He climbed over the thwarts into the bows, where he had left the leather case, and for the next five minutes was occupied in removing screws from various parts of the reel preparatory to injecting its interior with a grease gun and an oil pump. Finally he replaced the screws, wiped the outside with a

rag and laid it down. Then and only then did he begin to eat.

Meanwhile Bill and the crew rigged a block and tackle and set about the serious business of getting the tunny on board.

CHAPTER XV

THE ACCIDENT

EVEN the unenthusiastic Sergeant Leverton was galvanized into activity by the sight of Marston's epic struggle. He sat down over the rod-socket and allowed himself to be lashed in and fastened to his rod. He then began to fish for the very first time in his life. It was really absurd—just as ridiculous as for a person ignorant of firearms to begin by tiger hunting.

"What a wicked waste," said Drury. "Hundreds of anglers would give ten years of their lives to do this, only they can't afford it, and here you are, bunged into it at somebody else's expense, and you'd be just as happy—or just as miserable—fishing off the pier with an outfit that cost sixpence instead of sixty pounds. Why, damn it, man, your hook isn't even in the water!"

With an effort Leverton took his fascinated eyes off the sweating angler in the other boat and lowered his hook. Possibly it was due to his extreme clumsiness, possibly there were no more tunny round

that particular trawler at the time, but he fished stolidly during nearly the whole of Marston's three-hour fight and never had a bite. It must be admitted that most of the time he was watching the erratic movements of the "Pictondale's" dinghy instead of attending to the business in hand. Tom was very anxious to go on to another trawler. He explained that it was not much use fishing except when the nets were being hauled, which only took place every three or four hours. Drury turned down this suggestion. He wanted to remain near to the "Pictondale," and this could best be accomplished by stopping where they were, for curiously enough Marston's tunny, though full of fight, had not towed the dinghy very far away. It had travelled in sweeping curves and circles, always returning nearly to its original place.

"Must have a nest there!" observed Drury, noticing this peculiarity.

"Do tunnies have nests?" asked the literal-minded Leverton.

"Don't know. I shouldn't think so. If you get pulled over the side by one you might find out and let me know."

"There isn't any chance of that, is there?"

"No, sir," said Tom reassuringly. "They can't pull you out. Even if your reel jammed, you're tied in. All that can happen is that they tow the

boat. And you can always cut the line if you want. There's never been any accidents, as far as I know."

"That's a good job. Anyhow, I'm fed up with this. It beats me why people pay seven or eight pounds a day to do it. Will you have a go, sir?"

"Not in these clothes," replied Drury. "I'm supposed to be the assistant engineer. Want any help down in the engine room?" he added over his shoulder.

Sam chuckled, but did not reply. The question was purely rhetorical, as the tiny box which covered the engine would not hold one man in comfort, let alone two.

"No, you'll have to go on with it, Leverton. Not that it's much good staying out here. His trip is genuine enough."

Leverton brightened up and made a move as if to unship his rod.

"Can we go back, then, sir?"

"No. On second thoughts I'm afraid not. We'd better see it through. It wouldn't do to lose sight of him. He might land twenty miles down the coast if we went back."

There was a sudden exclamation of dismay from Tom Jennings. He had just hauled in the ropes which were towing his plaice, and was staring blankly at their empty ends. The two beautiful

fish which he was about to skin and prepare for to-morrow's tea were gone.

"Yah, call yourself a sailor!" jeered Sam. "You tied 'em on with granny knots. That's why they've come loose."

"I did nowt of t'sort," retorted Tom indignantly. "Look here," and he held out the frayed and tarry ends. "T'rope's wore through."

By this time the "Pictondale" was preparing to fish again. The two anglers, rested and refreshed, got back into the dinghy, but this time Harrison wore the harness. Marston picked up the safety rope and was about to slip it over his companion's shoulders when he hesitated.

"Better use another one," he said. "I heard this one creak a bit this morning, and I don't altogether trust it. I've got a spare one here."

He produced a length of new rope ready spliced into a large loop to fit round the waist, and a small loop at the other end to fix over a stout hook screwed into one of the thwarts.

"It's quicker than lashing you in," he explained. "Besides, it's safer. If the boat happened to capsize you could slip this off the hook, but it would be a bit awkward if you were tied in."

This was sensible enough; it was very thoughtful of Marston to take all these precautions for his safety, but Harrison was not deceived by them.

Coming from a man like Marston, they rang false, and he sensed again that constant undercurrent of hostility which he had noticed for weeks. This solicitude for his welfare was probably meant to put him off his guard until an opportunity arose to serve him as Reinold had been served. He would take good care that the opportunity never did arise. It was never very difficult to fathom Marston's thoughts; his brain was not really of a high order. However, he needn't bother about that now. The sandbag solution of the problem was definitely out of the question with the coble hanging about, so he might as well forget all about it and enjoy the day's sport. One consolation, the "Pictondale" was a safeguard to himself as well. He had nothing to fear from Marston while witnesses were about.

Harrison settled himself down in the revolving chair and pulled the loop down over his shoulders. The spliced eye at the other end of the rope was hooked on to the thwart.

"All fixed up now?" said Marston. "Lean well back in your chair to take the weight off the rope. You'll have quite enough of it pulling at your stomach and trying to cut you in half when you've hooked a fish. So there's no need to lean on it now. Here's the rod."

He handed it over and Harrison took it gingerly.

"Keep your thumbs on the leather brake," ad-

vised Marston. "I should screw down the other brake a trifle as well if I were you. Remember what happened to me when my reel overran."

"What is an overrun?" inquired Harrison, who was by no means clear about it.

"Well, if you haven't any check on and the reel is free to revolve—it goes round pretty easily, you know, on ball bearings—and you get a hard pull on the line it spins the reel like a top, and that throws off line faster than it can run out through the guide rings. And then it tangles up. Hell of a mess. You saw what happened to mine, all because I let go for a second to blow my nose."

Harrison was clinging on to the leather brake as though his life depended upon it.

"Don't let your line get loose at all or it'll jam, for certain. Especially when you first get a bite. That's the time when it's most likely to happen, because it's the time when they take out the line fastest. Now, are you ready?"

"Yes, I think so." Harrison felt like a person driving a car for the first time. There seemed to be such a lot of things to remember. You must keep your thumbs down and not let the line loose. Already his thumbs were aching with the totally unnecessary amount of pressure he was exerting. You mustn't have the brakes on too tight or the fish may snap the line. Were they too tight? How

could one tell? He hastily released his grip with one hand and unscrewed the capstan brake half a turn, just to be on the safe side. You must lean back and not pull on the rope. He leaned back until the chair creaked. You mustn't get the line tangled up with the harness. No, it was all clear. You must keep the rod in the socket. Was it in? Yes. And so on.

The "Merline" was again hauling after her four-hour interval. Marston began to throw out ground bait.

Just at that moment there came a tremendous tug at Leverton's hook. He watched his spinning reel open-mouthed.

"Now you've got one," said Drury. "See what you can do with it."

The sergeant clung on to his rod and said not a word. He had seen the vast size of the tunny already caught, and it overawed him to think that a fish like that was on his line.

One of Marston's ground-baits was snapped up. Evidently there were several tunny about. Marston carefully guided Harrison's hook out over the water with the bamboo pole.

"Look, here he comes," he whispered, pointing to a dim, torpedo-shaped shadow twenty yards away. Quick as a flash the giant mackerel darted at the bait. Up he came and took it from under-

neath. Marston watched Harrison out of the corner of his eye. The amateur angler held his breath and braced his wrists ready to brake hard. With a gentle sweep of its tail the tunny moved away.

A hoarse, excited cry came from Harrison. What was happening? The line was not running out. It twanged against the rod as the pull came on the hook. Perhaps he'd got the capstan brake on too tight. Marston said it was a very strong one. Look out, the rod's bending. The butt rattled in the gunmetal socket, and there was a terrific pull on the shoulder harness that sent his head flying back with a jerk. Why didn't something break under the strain? The tackle must be made of wonderful material. Another jerk that jarred him from head to foot. Rugby football's a parlour game compared to this. One or two women have done it—must be regular Amazons—all wire and whipcord. Leg nearly went through the side of the boat then. What the hell's the matter with the brake? Why won't it come off? Unscrew, unscrew, to the left, to the left, not to the right, you fool. The capstan wheel spun round under his shaking fingers. That should be better. Pull now, you blighter. The rod bent still further and a few yards of line ran slowly out.

Harrison was now thoroughly muddled and scared. He forgot all his instructions and let go

the leather brake. The capstan brake was already off as far as it would go, or at any rate he thought it was. The tunny was swimming gently round in a circle, playing with the bait.

Again came that awful jerk as the fish glided away from the boat. Harrison's arms nearly came out of their sockets, and the straps of the harness creaked and cut into his flesh. Only his great weight saved him from being lifted out of the chair. Look out! Another pull. Harder this time. The strain tilted him forwards on to his toes. He was half standing. Thank goodness he was tied in. He felt the reassuring rope gently tighten round his waist. The strain slackened and he slumped back into the chair. Let's have another go at that blasted brake. Perhaps it's a left-hand thread. Don't remember Marston saying so. Doesn't seem to make the slightest difference which way you turn it. Perhaps it wasn't unscrewed properly. He ought to have listened more carefully when Marston was explaining it. Perhaps the line was twisted round the rod. No, it wasn't. Was it fouling one of the guide rings? No, everything was clear. Nothing can have gone wrong. Naturally a damned big fish like that would pull hard. Silly ass he was to be surprised when it did. No wonder Marston sweated after three hours of it. But the reel seemed to work easier then. Of course it would. Every-

thing looks easy when an expert's doing it. Good job it does get easier with practice. No man alive could stand three hours of this. Still, a ham-handed beginner can't expect to do it right first time. Ah, that's better. I can manage nicely when he pulls no harder than this. But why wouldn't the line move? Surely Marston had been able to let it run out easily when he wanted to. Must ask him how to do it. No, dash it, I won't yell for help in the first minute. Again Harrison was wrenched forward on to his toes, and his hands grabbed frantically at the seat. Still the tunny was playing with the bait. Shuttling lazily backwards and forwards and turning every time the pull of the line checked him. Gosh, if it was like this when he was swimming slowly, what was it like when he really got away with it? This was a man's job if ever there was one. If it pulled any harder it would surely pull him out of the boat. Where's that knife to cut the line? Quick! Oh, hell, dropped it over the side myself. Never mind, I'm roped in. Can't fall out. The worst he can do is to tow the boat.

The tunny tired of its game and lashed out with its tail in real earnest. A prolonged, terrific superhuman pull, far harder than before. The line hummed viciously, the rod bent and Harrison was dragged to his feet. The rod came out of the socket, but the stout harness held firm. The stress

of it drove the breath from his body in a convulsive gasp, and the vise-like grip of his leather breastplate tightened until his ribs seemed to crack and bend under its crushing force. Leaning backwards with all his fourteen stone weight thrown on to his heels, his hands let go their futile grip on the reel and grasped wildly at the chair. He leaned further and further forwards, helpless in the grip of a force far stronger than himself. What's happened to the safety rope? The low gunwale of the dinghy caught him just below the knees.

The unmerciful pull on the harness kept on—increased—his body bent forward—he tried to shout for help, but he had no breath left—his kneecaps ground into the hard wood of the gunwale—the grey water was coming nearer—and nearer—almost over ——

A wild, despairing yell and Wayland Harrison disappeared in the wake of the tunny. For a fraction of a second the frayed end of the safety rope floated on the surface, then it, too, went under. A few bubbles floated up to the top and burst.

The whole thing was over with incredible speed. Not until Harrison rose to his feet for the last time and rocked unsteadily against the side of the boat did there appear to be anything wrong. Bill was actually laughing at the antics of the frightened novice, but his laugh ended abruptly.

Drury saw the accident. Quick as thought he seized the open knife lying by Leverton's side and cut the sergeant's line. The latter, confused by the rapidity of events and by the thrill of hooking a tunny, was fumbling at his harness buckles with wet fingers, apparently with some idea of freeing the fish that way. Sam opened the throttle as wide as it would go, and "Silver Queen" and "Pictondale" raced neck and neck for the dinghy. Marston was standing up in the boat, looking wildly in every direction and shouting at the top of his voice. There was nothing to be seen. The cobles circled round and round in wide sweeps.

CHAPTER XVI

"THE BODY HAS BEEN RECOVERED"

It was quite dark when the two cobles returned to harbour. For nearly five hours they had kept up their fruitless search, which was only abandoned when failing light made it futile to continue any longer. From the moment when Harrison disappeared over the side of the dinghy not a single trace of him had been seen. Marston, with considerable presence of mind, dropped his anchor overboard within half a minute of the accident, so that the position of the dinghy was fixed.

Here he remained, a lonely, solitary figure, ceaselessly scanning the troubled greyness of the sea. Round him cruised the two cobles in ever-widening circles, every man on the lookout and lifebelts ready to hand. Presently the melancholy little flotilla was joined by boats from the trawlers, and all the surrounding water was systematically patrolled, not once only, but repeatedly.

As time went on hope dwindled and receded. For the first minute or two there were confident ex-

pectations of seeing a head appear above the water. Then later, a limp, unconscious figure was looked for. Later still, it became a question not of saving life, but of recovering a body. Not even this poor satisfaction was granted to them, and the sun went down and the twilight deepened and the stars came out.

The trawlers' boats departed and the cobles converged upon the anchored dinghy which marked the scene of the tragedy. The "Silver Queen" was the first to run alongside.

"Jump in," said Drury, and Marston, trembling in every limb, obeyed. His hands were numb and blue, his eyes ached and his teeth were chattering. Sitting in a small boat for hours on end is at best uncomfortable, especially after a long day's fishing and makeshift meals. Add to this a chilly evening, considerable mental strain and complete lack of physical exercise and it becomes an ordeal. The anchor was pulled up and the dinghy taken in tow by the "Pictondale."

"Have a drink of this and pull yourself together. Sorry we haven't anything stronger."

The inspector levered the tin top off the last remaining bottle of beer and handed it over. Marston took a long drink and sighed deeply. Then he stared in bewilderment at the blue jerseyed figure before him.

"All right, I'm not a ghost," said Drury. "It's me all right."

"What—what are you doing here?" stammered Marston.

"It's a free country," replied Drury. "Even a detective can fish if he likes. No, as a matter of fact, I'll tell you why I came. I was following Mr. Harrison."

"Harrison? What for?"

"Well, to tell you the truth," said Drury mendaciously, "I thought he might have something to do with Mr. Reinold's death." Drury hated to tell lies, but on general principles he judged it best not to let Marston suspect the truth. After all, he had gone to considerable trouble to follow Marston's movements unostentatiously and unobserved, and there was no reason why this unforeseen accident should be allowed to give away the secret when one thumping good lie could prevent it. "It doesn't matter much now whether he had anything to do with it or not, does it? He's out of our jurisdiction, poor devil."

Marston was silent.

"Could he swim?" asked Drury.

"I'm sure I don't know. It wouldn't make any difference if he could. The best swimmer alive couldn't do anything if he was being towed by a tunny."

The engine of the "Silver Queen" spluttered and stopped.

"Run out of petrol," said Sam. "Haven't got any more. Didn't know we was going to stay oot all this time."

Tom hailed the "Pictondale."

"Any petrol left?"

"Aboot three gallon in t'tank. That's all. All t'spare tins is empty."

"Can you give us a tow?"

"Ay."

The rope was passed across and secured, and the little procession moved on into the darkness. There was no need, however, to light the binnacle lamps. A landsman could have found his way back. From end to end of the Foreshore Road festoons of fairy lights hung between the tramway posts. Above this shining girdle of colour rose, tier upon tier, the lights of the town. Every few minutes the cars of the cliff tramways crawled up their precipitous tracks like luminous beetles. Even the ruins of the old Castle stood out brightly in the anachronistic glow of the floodlights which were trained upon them. The electric glare could be seen miles out to sea.

Extract from the "Scarborough Telegraph," September 10th, 1931.

ANGLING ACCIDENT AT SCARBOROUGH
TRAGIC DEATH OF WELL-KNOWN BUSINESS MAN

A sad accident took place off Scarborough yesterday afternoon, which resulted in the death of a well-known and highly respected Southbourne resident. Mr. Wayland Harrison, Managing Director of Reinold's Foundry, an old-established firm of brass-founders, accidentally fell overboard whilst fishing for tunny.

Detective-Inspector Drury of Scotland Yard, who happened to be fishing in the vicinity and witnessed the sad ending to his brother angler's sport, stated to our representative this morning that the tragedy took place so suddenly and so unexpectedly that there was no chance of rendering assistance until it was too late.

Mr. Edgar Marston, who was in the boat with the deceased gentleman, is greatly distressed by the tragic death of his companion. Peculiar poignancy is lent to the affair by the fact that Mr. Marston is, of course, a well-known big game fisherman, and he was initiating Mr. Harrison into the intricacies of his favourite sport at the time of the accident. Mr. Marston, it will be remembered, is the holder of the silver cup presented by the "Scarborough Telegraph" last year for the largest tunny caught on rod and line off Scarborough. His record fish weighed over seven hundred pounds (picture on page 8).

The coble " Pictondale," which had been chartered for the day by Mr. Marston, searched without avail until darkness set in, assisted by Inspector Drury's boat and the crew of several trawlers. The body has not yet been recovered.

Stop Press News

Body of missing angler recovered by coastguards this morning. Inquest to be held on Wednesday.

CHAPTER XVII

MARINE STORES AND DYNAMOS

DRURY entered the mortuary and gazed at the motionless form before him. The body of Wayland Harrison, still dressed in its sodden clothes just as it had been recovered from the water, lay on a slate-topped table. The smell of the sea was in the room, and little trickles of water ran down the channels in the slab and dripped slowly and steadily on to the floor. The harness was still in position, the light brown newness of its leather darkened and softened somewhat by prolonged soaking in salt water, but the coastguards had detached the rod from it for ease of transport.

Drury bent down and picked the rod up. Save for a few scratches on its polished surface, a bent guide ring and one or two tufts of seaweed adhering to it, it was unaffected by its immersion. The reel also did not seem to have suffered. It was an exactly similar outfit to the one which Drury had hired from Hardy Brothers—the same short, sturdy rod and the same massive, well-made reel. The hook and wire trace were missing, torn off by chance

or by some cunning artifice of the hunted fish. Drury idly tested the wheel of the capstan brake and found that it was fully unscrewed in the off position. He was always interested in mechanical problems and was never happier than when taking to pieces a motor-cycle engine or an alarm-clock, so he hunted round in his pockets for his knife, which contained among other things a screwdriver. He began to unscrew the studs which held the side of the reel in position in order to see the effect of salt water on the interior mechanism.

While he was doing this the police surgeon arrived, so Drury abandoned his researches and assisted the constable on duty to undress the body. During the progress of the post-mortem he went through the heap of clothes and emptied all the pockets. They contained a perfectly normal assortment of odds and ends—keys, small change, pipe, fountain pen, and an ever-pointed pencil. A mass of pulp which had once been a match-box, a sodden tobacco pouch and a few limp pound notes stained brown by the draggled leather of the case in which they were carried. The breast pocket of the coat, however, contained something very unusual—a sandbag.

Near the bundle of clothes was lying the so-called safety rope, which had been the first thing to be removed in the undressing process, as it had been

worn on top of the harness. It was a strong piece of new, white Manila, with a neatly whipped eye-splice forming the body loop. Drury picked up the free end to see if it had broken. Quite obviously it had not. For the last inch of the rope the strands had been untwisted, or unlaid, to use the nautical term. A little further up they showed signs of gaping—evidently there had been an eye-splice on this end also; that is, the unlaid strands of the end had been interwoven with the rope itself to form a small loop.

The inspector looked at the unravelled ends more closely. Then he passed them between his finger and thumb. He rubbed his finger and thumb together reflectively and then took up a piece of paper and dabbed the rope end on to it. Then he went back to the reel and took out the remaining screws.

An hour later the police surgeon finished his examination of the body.

"May I ask what you've found, sir?" inquired Drury.

"He died from drowning," was the reply. "Definite evidence of it. Why, you weren't expecting anything else, were you?"

"No," replied Drury. "There wasn't any doubt about it. I saw him alive myself one minute; the next second he fell in, and—here he is. The only thing is the coroner will want to know why he fell

in. I don't want to butt in on your part of it, doctor, but he's a big, beefy looking chap. Isn't he the sort of person who might easily have a stroke, especially if he was excited?"

"No sign of that at all," replied the doctor. "Heart and arteries quite normal. He probably hadn't a high blood pressure. Brain's all right too."

With that the doctor packed his instruments and departed.

Drury also left the mortuary and wandered down to the Foreshore. Presently he came across a door labelled "Oil and Rope Shop. Marine Store." He went in, to find himself surrounded by coils of rope, rolls of canvas, drums of engine oil, sea boots, asbestos packings, net floats and crab-pot frames. A pungent but not unpleasant smell of tar pervaded the whole atmosphere of the crowded little shop.

He stated his requirements to the proprietor, who promptly produced a coil of white Manila. A quarter of an hour later Drury prepared to leave.

"How much do I owe you?" he asked.

The man placed four short lengths of Manila on the scales.

"It's sold by weight," he explained. "Threepence for the rope. I'll leave the rest to you."

Drury handed him half a crown and walked out without waiting for any change. From the proprietor's expression it appeared that he was pleased

with the transaction. Drury was also satisfied. The only flaw in his content was that the harsh and hairy bits of rope pricked his legs through his trouser pockets. They were too bulky to go into his coat pockets without being unsightly, and he positively refused to walk in public carrying a handful of twelve-inch lengths of rope. He would have had no objection whatever to carrying a coil of rope. That would at least have looked sensible, if somewhat unusual. But to expose to the public gaze odd bits, of a length obviously useless for any practical purpose, jarred on his sense of the fitness of things.

His next visit was to a garage, where he surprised the salesman by asking for a discarded dynamo, or, failing that, an old bicycle hub.

"Any old thing will do," he said. "It doesn't matter how old it is."

The mystified mechanic led the way to a yard at the back of the premises, and pointed to a heap of miscellaneous rubbish which lay in the corner. It was just the sort of jumble of useless scrap which accumulates at every garage. Bent and battered mudguards, broken springs, cracked pistons, a few worn-out tyres, old nuts and bolts, and here and there more complete accessories such as obsolete carburetors. It represented scores of pounds worth of ingeniously worked metal—when new. Those

rusty and disreputable mudguards had once, in their shiny and speckless youth, been looked upon with pride and polished with care. Those broken springs, now so corroded that their leaves were welded together in an immovable mass, were once prudently gaitered and oiled with the greatest regularity. The old carburetors had, in their time, been advertised as the very latest achievement in economical and scientific petrol-mixing. Now the total value was a few shillings as scrap metal. It was difficult even to find a purchaser who would take them away.

Drury looked over the assorted pile and finally saw what he wanted tucked under a dilapidated horsehair cushion which had once formed part of a costly limousine.

"This'll do," he said, and picked up the old, worn-out dynamo. "Why, there are two of them. I'll have them both."

The mechanic took them along to an evil-smelling tin bath and gave them a brush down with paraffin and a hasty rub with cotton waste. This removed most of the grease and some of the rust and improved their appearance considerably.

"How much?" asked Drury.

"They're no good, you know. That's why we scrapped them. The makers said they were not worth repairing two years ago." Two years in the motor world is a geological epoch.

"Thanks for telling me. But they're just what I want."

"All right then, mister. Ninepence each." The inspector handed over the money and carried away his malodorous burdens dangling by a piece of stout string. His next visit was to a chemist's shop, where he purchased a pound of calcium sulphate at a cost of sixpence. He also called at a dry cleaner's and made himself pleasant to the girl behind the counter. So much so that she supplied him with the large-sized paper bag he required and refused to accept any payment for it. He folded it up carefully and put it in his pocket. It was a very large bag, of the size used for packing suits on their return from the dry cleaning process. He went back to his lodgings and deposited his curious purchases there, with the exception of the paper bag. In deference to the prejudices of his landlady the two dynamos, still reeking of paraffin, were left in the backyard. He then caught a tram which took him as far as West Street. From there he walked to the South Cliff Esplanade and to the lodging-house where Marston was staying.

Mr. Marston was out, the landlady informed him, but she expected him back to lunch in about half an hour. The inspector said he rather wanted to see Mr. Marston as soon as he came in, so he would wait. He was shown into a large front room

on the first floor. The landlady saw him settled in an armchair and presented him with the morning paper to pass the time.

She then left him and went on with the endless cleaning and washing up which forms so large a part of the lodging-house keeper's life. About five minutes later she stopped her work and listened in astonishment. From upstairs came a most extraordinary noise, as of beating carpets. All her lodgers were out, she knew, and the servant was emptying a bucketful of rubbish into the dust-bin—it must be the gentleman who was waiting for Mr. Marston. What on earth was happening? Better go and see. It sounded as if damage was being done.

She dropped her dishcloth, gave her hands a hurried wipe on her apron and waddled up the stairs as fast as her somewhat wheezy chest would allow. The thumping noise stopped as she left the cellar kitchen, but she faced the remaining steps undauntedly. As she reached the landing the thumping began again. It sounded different this time, but that was perhaps because it was so much nearer. It sounded as though he was hitting the window. Was the man mad?

She knocked at the door with one hand and opened it at the same moment with the other. The eccentric visitor was standing at the window with a

rolled up newspaper in his hand. He turned round as she entered and saw the look of surprised inquiry on her face.

"It's all right," he said with a smile, and Drury's smile could be very reassuring at times. "I've just been swatting a couple of wasps that came in through the window. Big fellows they were too."

Before she had time to reply footsteps were heard coming up the stairs, and Marston appeared in the doorway.

"Why, hello, inspector; what are you doing here?"

The landlady was satisfied when she saw that her lodger recognized his visitor. At any rate she departed.

"Just come to tell you that they've found Mr. Harrison's body. It's at the mortuary, and you'll have to identify it for the inquest. I'll let you know later about the time."

"It's a sad business," said Marston. "Rotten job for me. I can't say I liked him particularly, but, still, I'd known him for a good many years."

"Sorry, but it can't be helped. Inquests are always unpleasant for somebody, I'm afraid. Well, I must get back now. I thought perhaps you'd like to know about it unofficially, before they sent you a subpœna for the inquest."

"Thanks very much. Very good of you. By the

way, has my tackle been found, as well as the poor chap's body?"

"Yes."

"Can I have it back? I want to get rid of it. I feel as if I shall never fish again after this. I shall clear out everything I possess that has anything to do with tunny and sell it; the sooner the better. I know a man who wants to buy a rod second-hand, and I think he would take mine if I could let him have it immediately."

"Sorry," apologized Drury. "I'm afraid you'll have to wait until after the inquest, as a matter of form. You won't have to wait long, though."

"Right. I'll try and put this chap off for a day or two."

Drury went back to his lodgings and spent the whole afternoon experimenting with his strange purchases.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE INQUEST

RANDOLPH ROBINSON was on the staff of the "Scarborough Telegraph." His mother called him a journalist; sometimes, when speaking to people who were not likely to find out the truth, she promoted him to the rank of an author. He called himself a reporter, and the editor called him many things. In actual fact he was rather more than an office boy. Sometimes, when no one else was available, he was in very truth a reporter, but only for minor events. More often he presided over the outer office, where his duties included stamping and posting letters, accepting small advertisements and the money for their insertion, selling carbon paper and envelopes, delivering occasional parcels of jobbing printing and cleaning his nails with a pocket knife.

He was, in theory, a man of the great wild, open spaces, whose natural instinct was to ride a half tamed horse or to pace the quarter deck of a pirate ship, or, failing that, to drive a racing car. In practice the largest open space he patronized was Peasholme Park; he had never ridden a horse in his

life; he suffered from seasickness far too severely to pace a deck of any sort; and he was not old enough to get a driving license. Few of us realize the ambitions of our youth.

Moreover, he was constantly getting into trouble because the speed of his shorthand was not fast enough and his typing was slow and unreliable. Consequently he was never sent to represent the "Telegraph" at important functions, such as Council meetings and bazaar openings. He was incapable of taking down intelligibly a speech of more than thirty seconds' duration. At the end of that time his pencil lagged so hopelessly behind the speaker that in order to keep pace he was forced to omit large chunks of oratory and to leave the majority of sentences unfinished, in the hope—utterly unjustified by experience—that he would be able to fill in the blanks afterwards from memory. Inquests, however, were one of the few functions within his limited capacity, since the whole proceedings were usually condensed into a paragraph of standardized phraseology. Really, all that was required were a few names and dates and the verdict.

Randolph envied the coroner tremendously. To sit there, undisputed lord of the court, to be addressed respectfully by the police, to be able to compel witnesses to appear and give evidence, to

have the power to issue warrants for arrest—all these things appeared to Randolph to be romantic and utterly desirable. Power and responsibility were what Randolph admired, all the more so because he was never likely to attain to either himself. Even in the office there was nobody junior to him, nobody whom he could order about or chastise. Until recently there had been an office boy, in whose eyes Randolph was a great man, which was balm and consolation to his vanity, but even that satisfaction was now denied him. Owing to the increased rates and rising income tax involved in the curious process known as National Economy the office boy was sacked, and his duties, but not his emoluments, descended upon Randolph by a process of natural selection.

Randolph had been told off to report an inquest, so he arrived at the Town Hall in good time. He was always early for outside jobs, because it was a good excuse to get away from the stuffy office and from the smell of paper and printing ink. He hung about outside the door, polluting the air with the smoke of a cheap cigarette and cursing the monotony of his job. Even the coroner's work must be dull at times, he thought. Of course the coroner had to view the bodies and could boss the police about. That was something. But, from the point of view of a reporter, there was nothing to alleviate the

boredom. All inquests appeared to be exactly the same. Generally some old person died and the doctor couldn't give a certificate because he hadn't seen the patient for some time. Then the coroner, who never fussed and was always in a hurry, rapidly took evidence from a weeping relative, glanced through the post-mortem report, asked the doctor a few questions and returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence. Why, there wasn't even a jury in most of them. It was all very disappointing, and not at all the sort of thing Randolph had been led to expect from the detective novels.

A policeman, looking incredibly youthful and unofficial without his helmet, put his head out of the door and looked up and down the street. This Randolph rightly interpreted as a sign that the court was now open, so he pinched off the end of his cigarette and went in.

The court was empty, until a few minutes later the young policeman reappeared and ushered in a nondescript group of men. They did not go to the seats usually reserved for relatives, nor to the public gallery, and Randolph realized that, this time at any rate, there was going to be a jury.

Greatly daring, but emboldened by his official standing as a member of the Press, he leaned forward and asked the constable the reason for this innovation.

"Accident—drownding," explained the constable, most illegally anticipating the verdict, but flattered at being able to assist the omniscient Press. "Mr. Fraser wanted a jury, because you never know what's going to happen in these cases."

Randolph nodded his head wisely.

"I see. Compensation and insurance claims." He meant to make it perfectly plain that he did see.

At that moment the local inspector entered, followed by a tall, dark-haired man carrying a suitcase.

"Know who that is?" whispered the constable.

"No."

"He's a Scotland Yard inspector."

Randolph was thrilled to the core. He was acquainted with many detectives in books, both probable and improbable, but he had never seen one before.

"What's he doing here if it's just an accident?" he inquired.

"Oh, he's a witness. He happened to see it."

Randolph's excitement subsided. Was he never to see an interesting case?

Marston was the next arrival, and he stood looking uncertainly round him for a moment or two, until the constable came forward and showed him where to sit. A couple of minutes later Bill Price and his crew entered and were also provided with

seats. In tribute to the occasion they had discarded their working clothes and were clad in their Sunday suits. They looked extremely stiff and unhappy. The crew of the "Silver Queen" had not been officially summoned to attend, but were in the front row of the gallery. Being merely onlookers they wore their ordinary clothes and were comfortable.

The door leading from the Magistrates' Room opened and the coroner came in. He walked briskly to his desk, spread out a bundle of papers, dipped his pen in the inkpot and cleared his throat.

"Gentlemen," he began, looking at the jury, "we are here to inquire into the tragic death of Mr. Wayland Harrison, whose body you have just viewed. First witness, please."

The local inspector beckoned to Marston, who stepped forward into the witness-box and took the oath.

"Name, please?" asked the coroner.

"Edgar Marston Hemsworth," replied Marston. Drury had warned him to give his proper name rather than that by which he was usually known.

"Occupation?"

"Medical practitioner."

"Thank you. Now, Dr. Hemsworth, you have seen the body lying in the mortuary, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you recognize it?"

"I did. It was that of my late employer, Mr. Wayland Harrison."

"When did you last see him alive?"

"On Sunday afternoon."

"Where?"

"In a boat."

"Will you tell the jury what happened on that afternoon?"

Marston explained how Harrison had accompanied him on the fishing expedition, primarily as a spectator; how he, witness, had caught a tunny during the morning and how deceased's enthusiasm made him express a wish to try for one also. Mr. Harrison, he explained, had always been a keen sportsman.

"And did he fish?" asked the coroner.

"Yes, sir. I lent him my tackle and he hooked a fish almost at once."

"What happened then?"

"He seemed to lose his head and get excited when the fish began to pull. He half stood up in his chair several times. I told him to sit down, but I don't think he heard me. He appeared to be very excited."

"Was he an experienced angler?"

"No, quite a beginner. I don't think he had ever had a rod in his hand before."

"May I ask a question, sir?" put in one of the jurymen.

Mr. Fraser nodded.

"Wasn't it rather foolish of him to start by fishing for tunny?"

"You needn't answer that question unless you like, Dr. Hemsworth," said the coroner. "The wisdom of other people's acts—or lack of it—is no concern of yours."

"Well, sir, as things have turned out it was foolish of him, but I did not think so at the time."

"It's always easy to be wise after the event," agreed the ever-courteous Mr. Fraser.

"You are certainly dealing with very large and very powerful fish, but there should be no danger."

Marston went on to explain how the angler was tied into the boat. He then recounted how Harrison fell over the side.

"What was the cause of the accident, in your opinion?"

"I think it was due to his nervousness and inexperience, which made him get up instead of sitting still. Then he overbalanced, perhaps because the fish gave an extra hard pull, or possibly owing to the rolling of the boat. If he had only listened to me and kept in his chair there would have been no danger at all."

"Thank you. Any questions?" and Mr. Fraser looked at the jury.

There were no questions, and Marston left the box, to be succeeded by Bill Price.

"Now, Mr. Price, did you see the accident?"

"Ay," said Bill in a still, small voice, apparently stricken with stage fright.

"Speak a little louder, please. Were you also in the boat with Mr. Harrison and the last witness?"

"No, sir," roared Bill, overshooting the mark in the other direction in his anxiety. "I wor in the coble aboot two hundred yards astern."

"Can you add anything to Dr. Hemsworth's account which might help us?"

"I don't know as I can. I saw him get up and wave his arms aboot instead of sitting still and holding on to his reel as he ought to have done, and so I'm not surprised at him falling oot. You can't catch tunny standing up. You see, there isn't much room in a dinghy and the sides aren't very high."

"Quite. But Dr. Hemsworth tells us that it is usual for the fisherman to be tied in. Is that so?"

"Ay."

"Was Mr. Harrison tied in?"

"Ay. I saw Mr. Marston put the rope roond him just after they got back into the dinghy."

"Mr. Marston?" queried the coroner, puzzled. "Who is he?"

"That gentleman over there." Bill jerked his thumb in Marston's direction.

"Dr. Hemsworth is sometimes known by his second name, sir," explained Drury. "He told us about that some time ago."

Informal asides and interruptions of this sort sometimes do occur in a coroner's court, which is not bound by any stringent rules of procedure.

"Oh, I see. Now, Mr. Price, if the deceased was roped in, can you explain how he managed to fall over the side?"

Bill scratched his head and thought a while.

"Well, he was a heavy man," he began, "and when he started getting up and bending forward I s'pose he put too much weight on the rope."

"Was the rope in good condition?"

"Ay. Mr. Marston had two of 'em, and they was both new ones."

"Is there usually much strain on it?"

"No, sir, I don't think so. If you screw your brake doon and let the fish tow the boat that's the biggest strain you can get on it, and that isn't really very much. At least, if you're sitting doon with your feet well braced up you should be able to stand it easily. It doesn't take much of a pull to tow a small boat."

"That's true," said the coroner. "We've all seen big canal barges towed by a horse. I don't know what weight a loaded barge is, but I should think it must be fifty times as much as a horse could pull on land."

"I've never fished myself," went on Bill. "But I think that generally, even when the fish is towing the boat, there doesn't seem to be much strain on the rope."

"You mean that the angler takes all the pull?"

"Yes."

"I think we might recall Dr. Hemsworth and ask him about that," said Mr. Fraser.

Randolph's notebook was in a fearful and wonderful muddle with his attempts to cope with this spate of questions. "Hooked a fish and lost its head—experienced beginner—wisdom of other peoples concern—overbalanced because the fish gave William Price boatman 7 Lodge Crescent canal barges weigh fifty horses." In such manner ran the framework of his report, a framework which it was going to be difficult to clothe in language to be understood of the people. Randolph sighed as he looked at it and thought what the editor would say.

Bill gave place to Marston in the box, and went back to his seat, wiping his face with a large red and blue handkerchief. The police surgeon came in at this moment and sat down behind him.

"Do you agree with the last witness that the pull on the safety rope is not very great, Mr. Marston?"

"Yes, sir, generally speaking. Of course a sudden pull that took you unawares might throw your weight on to it. In fact, that is what it is there for. Ordinarily you can take the strain yourself with the help of the harness and the rod-socket, even when the boat is being towed, but the rope is there as an additional precaution."

"You had been fishing from the same boat during the morning, I understand?"

"That is so, sir."

"You were roped in, I take it?"

"Yes."

"With the same rope?"

"No, sir. There were two of them, as Price told you, both nearly new. The one I used seemed to creak a good deal, so I thought it safer to use the other one for Mr. Harrison."

"Apart from the creaking rope everything was in perfect order, I suppose?"

"Yes. I landed my fish with the same tackle about an hour before Mr. Harrison took it over. It weighed six hundred pounds and fought for three hours, so that is a pretty good testimonial for the tackle."

"It is indeed."

The jurymen were sitting just in front of Randolph, and he heard one of them say under his breath, "Damned waste of time, this. Why can't he get on with it?"

"Is the doctor here?" asked Mr. Fraser. "Yes, I'll take his evidence now, and then he can go."

The police surgeon was sworn and gave his name and qualifications. He handed his post-mortem report to the coroner and waited in silence while he read it.

"You have made a post-mortem examination on the body lying at the mortuary, doctor?"

"I have, sir."

"What did you find? I have your report here, so you need not go into great detail. If you will tell the jury the important points."

"There were a number of small red spots underneath the covering membrane of the lungs. The lungs themselves were distended and contained frothy, bloodstained fluid. The air passages also contained this froth. The skin was bleached and sodden, and there was sand beneath the finger-nails. The stomach contained about half a pint of water. There were no signs of injury on the body anywhere, with the exception of a cut on the forehead."

"What was the cause of death, doctor, in your opinion?"

"Death was due to drowning, sir. The wound on the face was trivial and, moreover, it was in-

flicted after death. The red spots on the lungs are known as Tardieu's spots, and they are really small hæmorrhages. They are a well-known sign of asphyxia. From them and from the condition of the lungs and stomach it is possible to express an opinion with some degree of certainty."

"Was there any sign of bodily disease?"

"None whatever. The organs were remarkably healthy."

"Was the appearance of the body consistent with a fall over the side of a boat?"

"It was."

"And, as far as you can say, there was no condition present which might have caused the fall, such as a stroke, for example, or a heart attack?"

"No, sir."

"So that the appearances are consistent with an accidental fall?"

"Yes."

"Is there anything else you wish to mention, doctor?"

"No, I don't think so."

"It is possible, I suppose," continued the coroner, "for a person who thus falls into the water, either accidentally or through illness, to die at once from heart failure due to the shock of it?"

"It is possible, but I don't think it happened in

this case, because the signs of asphyxia were so well marked, and because water had been swallowed. Of course, if he had drunk water just before death, one could not rely on its presence in the stomach as a sign."

"Does anybody know whether the deceased did drink just before his death?"

There was silence for a moment.

"Mr. Harrison had a drink with his dinner, sir," said Bill.

"How long before would that be?"

"Aboot an hour."

"Did he drink much?"

"No, only a mouthful of beer. I remember him grumbling because there wasn't much left."

"Oh, you remember that, do you? What makes you recall such details?"

Bill looked confused. He would probably have blushed, if it had been possible for a blush to be visible through the mahogany tan of his face.

"Well, sir, to tell you the truth, he offered me a drink of his beer, and—I think I must have supped a bit more than I meant to——"

There was a shout of laughter. Mr. Fraser hastily checked his own smile and held up his hand for silence.

"That disposes of the doubtful point, then,

doctor. In your opinion it is definitely a death due to immersion, and almost certainly due to an accidental fall as opposed to a fall caused by disease?"

"Yes."

"Then we needn't keep you any longer. If you will sign ——"

The police surgeon signed the abstract of his evidence and the receipt for his fee (after buying a twopenny stamp from one of the jurymen) and departed.

He liked inquests. Post-mortems took a lot of time and were hard work, but the payment was prompt and certain and they were interesting. Besides, Mr. Fraser was very considerate and never wasted his time at the inquest itself. He was always allowed to go as soon as his evidence had been taken.

The jurymen waited expectantly and whispered among themselves. There was no need to retire to consider their verdict. It was obvious—accidental death or death by misadventure or whatever the legal jargon was. The coroner would tell them the proper wording, anyway. Randolph had it already written down in his notebook—for once he was in advance of his work.

"Before I ask you to consider your verdict," resumed Mr. Fraser, "there is another witness to be heard."

Drury left his seat and took his stand in the empty witness-box.

"Name?" asked Mr. Fraser.

"Dennis Drury, sir."

"Occupation?"

"Detective Inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department, New Scotland Yard."

"You saw the accident too, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you agree with the evidence of the previous witnesses? I am not referring to the medical evidence, of course."

"I agree with their facts, sir—they gave an accurate account of what happened as far as I could see it—but I do not agree with their opinions."

"Will you explain what you mean, inspector? I don't quite understand, and I don't think the jury do, either."

At this point the local inspector got up, excused himself to the coroner and left the court.

"I mean, sir, that the deceased fell overboard, not because he lost his head and was excited—although he certainly did lose his head—but because he was pulled over by the tunny."

Randolph stifled a yawn and his opinion of detectives fell very considerably. What on earth did it matter whether the man fell or was pulled? Couldn't try the tunny for manslaughter, anyway.

Why didn't the coroner stop this silly ass? Old Fraser was generally very particular about witnesses keeping to the point, because he was always in such a hurry. Old Fraser merely nodded to Drury to continue.

"When the body was recovered and placed in the mortuary I took off the rope which was fastened round the waist. On examining the end I found that it had been spliced into a loop—an eye-splice, sailors call it—and the splice had given way—pulled out, in fact."

Drury bent down to his suit-case and produced a length of white Manila.

"This is the actual rope used," he said, holding it up for the jury to see. "You will notice that the loose strands at the end, which were unravelled in order to form the splice, are very short."

Bill Price and his crew and two fishermen who happened to be in the jury-box were very interested. This was something in their line. Tom Jennings leaned far out over the gallery rail so that he might miss nothing.

"Moreover," went on Drury, "they feel greasy to the touch and leave a transparent, oily mark on paper."

The inspector handed the rope to the foreman and dived into his suit-case again. This time he produced four short pieces of rope.

"Here are four eye-splices which I had made on the same sort of rope. This is an ordinary, properly made splice. The end is unravelled and the strands are pushed through part of the rope, which is untwisted for the purpose. You notice that they are put through three or four times, with the result that the splice will not slip however hard one pulls on the rope."

Here Drury threw all his weight on to the loop to demonstrate his point.

"The harder one pulls the tighter the strands are gripped. This second specimen is the same except that it is whipped or wrapped with twine, which is customary for neatness and protection. The strength of the splice does not depend on the binding in any way. The third splice is badly made—intentionally so. The unravelled ends are only put through once and then cut off short. It differs from Number One in being less tapered. But here is a fourth sample. This is made exactly like Number Three—badly, that is—but it is whipped. The whipping can be made to give the necessary taper, which makes it look, from the outside, just like the properly made splice. Another point. In Numbers Three and Four—the faulty splices—the strands were greased before the splices were made."

Drury handed over his specimens, each one neatly identified by a tied-on label, to the jury.

"Try the first two," he directed. "Pull them as hard as you like."

The jurymen did so, but the marine storekeeper's work stood firm. A properly made splice should be stronger than the rope itself.

"Now take Number Three and try it."

The foreman took it up and held it out to his neighbour. The latter gripped the loop while the foreman pulled. For a moment it stood the strain, and then, just as the foreman was getting his weight to bear, it gave way with a jerk. The foreman fell back in his seat and banged his head on the wooden panelling.

"That's all very well," he said, rubbing his head tenderly, "but I don't see that it matters if the splice did pull out. I mean I don't see that it's any worse—or any better—than the rope breaking. It's obvious that tunny fishers should be properly tied in. This chap wasn't, and paid for it, but it doesn't matter how the rope gave way. It did give way, that's the important point. I think all this is a waste of our time, Mr. Coroner." The foreman's temper had evidently suffered from his experiment with the splice.

"Just wait one moment," said Mr. Fraser. "Inspector Drury is not a man who talks for the sake of talking."

Drury reopened his suit-case and placed upon the

ledge before him two Hardy Zane Grey reels and two old dynamos.

"Before I continue, sir," he said, "will you question the other witness again?"

Bill Price, to his intense astonishment, was once more summoned into the witness-box.

"When Dr. Hemsworth and the deceased were fishing on Sunday," said Mr. Fraser, consulting his notes, "how many sets of tackle had they?"

"Only one."

"Which they both used?"

"Yes, sir." Bill could not for the life of him see the drift of these questions, but at any rate they were easy to answer.

"Was anything done to the reel that day?"

"How do you mean—anything done to it?"

"In the way of adjustments, repairs or attention of any kind?"

"No, sir. It wasn't adjusted and it didn't need repairing."

"Are you sure nothing was done to it at all? Was it never touched except when it was being used to fish with?"

"Well, it was oiled, sir."

"Oh, yes. Who oiled it?"

"Mr. Marston. It was his reel, you see, and he naturally looked after it. I remember him oiling it just before he had his dinner."

"Did anyone else touch it?"

"No, sir. Only Mr. Marston and Mr. Harrison."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Positive."

The coroner's officer motioned Bill out of the box, and Drury took his place.

"Here is the reel which was used by the deceased," said the inspector, laying the massive thing on the shelf in front of him. "It contains ball bearings to enable it to work efficiently under very arduous conditions. The mechanism, as you see, is closed in to protect it from the weather, but there are several screws in the side plates."

Drury produced a screwdriver and began to remove them.

"Through the holes," he went on, "oil and grease can be injected when necessary. Special oil pumps and grease guns are supplied by the makers for this purpose. The last witness told us that the owner did in fact inject his reel after he had used it and before he lent it to the deceased."

Drury handed the reel to the foreman.

"Will you look through the screw holes and pass it on to the other members of the jury?"

The reel was passed from hand to hand and held in various positions to get the light into the screw holes. One juryman produced an electric torch,

which he used to examine them. The foreman had another look at it and finally passed it back.

"What's that white stuff inside?" he asked.

Drury motioned him to keep the reel.

"Will you try to pull the line off it? The brake is fully unscrewed and the line should come off easily—like this."

The inspector took up the other reel.

"This is exactly the same type, and is one which I borrowed from the makers. Now, if I unscrew the capstan brake fully, as it is unscrewed in the one you are holding, the drum rotates easily when the line is pulled. Try it for yourselves on both reels." He pulled the line as he spoke, and the ratchet ticked gently as a few yards of fifty-four thread Cuttyhunk uncoiled on to the floor.

The foreman of the jury followed his example with the other reel and pulled. Nothing happened. He pulled again until the line cut into his fingers, but he was not able to move the revolving drum.

"The white stuff inside the reel is solid and gritty," went on Drury, "but it must have been liquid or nearly so when it was injected. What substance fulfils these conditions? It must be fluid enough to pass through the nozzle of a grease gun and through the screw holes, and it must set quickly when it gets inside. Moreover, it must clog the

bearing completely when it has set. The first thing one thinks of is plaster of Paris, mixed, perhaps, with a little sand. This can be made into a paste of any thickness and will set in a few minutes."

The jury were listening intently. No longer did the foreman seem to think it a waste of time. Randolph was scribbling for dear life.

"Will such a paste clog the bearings? Most efficiently, one would think. One could hardly imagine anything better. I have tested it in order to find out for certain. Here are two old dynamos. This one is untouched."

Drury always appeared at his worst while speaking in public. His sentences were short and jerky, and in order to avoid slang he went to the other extreme and became rather stilted in his talk. However, when he talked to an audience he generally had something of sufficient interest to say to make his hearers forget these deficiencies.

"It is just as it came from the scrap heap except that it has been cleaned. The armature spins easily. This other one was in exactly the same condition before I began to experiment with it. If anything its armature revolved rather more easily. I mixed plaster of Paris with water, added a little sea-shore sand and injected the paste into the bearings with a grease gun. Will you try it?"

The foreman took the dynamo and attempted to

rotate the armature. It was fixed and refused to move.

"My next step," continued Drury, "was to go to the lodgings of the owner of the reel and examine the coat which he was wearing at the time of the accident. As I was out fishing myself and was quite near both then and on the return journey, I was able to identify it without any difficulty. In one of the pockets I found traces of a white powder. I put the coat into a paper bag and beat it with a stick. The result was a teaspoonful of powder mixed with dust and fluff. This I took for analysis. I also scraped some of the gritty white deposit out of the reel and had that analysed."

Drury heaved a sigh of relief at finishing this unwontedly long speech, and stepped down from the box. A bald-headed little man was ushered into it and sworn by the coroner's officer. In reply to Mr. Fraser he stated that his name was George Henry Edmondson, that he was a Fellow of the Institute of Chemistry and a Fellow of the Chemical Society, and that he was a Public Analyst.

"You have tested certain specimens handed to you by Inspector Drury, Mr. Edmondson?"

"Yes, sir. The first one consisted of about a drachm of grayish powder which I was told had been recovered from the lining of a pocket. This was found to consist mostly of plaster of Paris. It

was not pure, but contained a certain amount of dirt and dust, and also some gritty particles which had the appearance, under the microscope, of ordinary sea sand. The other specimen consisted of a few small lumps of a white substance. It also was composed of plaster of Paris and sand. In this case dust and dirt were absent, but there was a considerable percentage of sodium chloride in it."

"Is that of any significance?"

"It probably means that the plaster had been moistened with sea water. I ought to have said that, in the other specimen, there was very much less sodium chloride—merely traces, probably accounted for by the presence of the sand."

This concluded the analyst's evidence, and Drury again mounted the steps leading to the box.

"Have you any further evidence to bring forward?" inquired Mr. Fraser.

"No, sir."

"Will you recapitulate to the jury your reconstruction of the manner of Mr. Harrison's death?"

"I have already given the essential facts, and it seems to me that the principle of the method is obvious. You are dealing with an immensely powerful fish, which is far stronger than any man living, but big game angling is not a dangerous sport because of the excellence of the tackle and the

precautions adopted. Ordinarily speaking, the only accident which is likely to occur is the breakage of the line and the loss of the fish. This may happen to an unskilful angler, or more rarely to an expert, especially if the reel or line jams for any reason. Generally, however, the fish is held under perfect control: line can be run out or checked by the brakes time after time until the fish is exhausted. If by chance a jam occurs or an unexpected tug when the fisherman is not ready for it, the rope round his waist acts as a safeguard. If the rope was omitted, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it wouldn't matter. Strong pulls by the fish can easily be controlled by letting the line run out to lessen the strain and using the brakes to tire out the fish. But supposing that *both these things go wrong together*—that the reel is deliberately wrecked, as in this case, and the splice is deliberately faked—then hooking a fish means certain death. This fact would be known to an expert fisherman, and it was an expert fisherman in whose pocket the plaster of Paris was found. It was an expert fisherman who had access to the reel. No one else touched it, as Mr. Price's evidence proves, and its interior is found to be clogged with plaster. Moreover, I have ascertained from H.M. Stationery Office that a copy of the Admiralty Manual of Seamanship was purchased by this same expert fisherman about a month ago.

This book contains much information on the subject of knots and splices."

There was absolute silence in the court during the inspector's deadly recital of facts. He had spoken slowly and carefully, and had allowed each sentence to penetrate the minds of his hearers before beginning the next. Even the coroner, hardened as he was, felt a thrill of horror as vague suspicions were rapidly replaced by definite accusations, as the unemotional voice of the inspector built up his case before the very eyes of the guilty man.

Marston's face was as white as chalk, and his shoulders seemed to have sagged and collapsed. During Drury's last speech he quietly moved, little by little, to the end of the bench on which he was sitting. He straightened out his trembling legs and looked at the door. It was only a yard away. The jurymen were looking at him curiously, but they were safely shut in their box. Drury was looking at the coroner. Marston made a wild, despairing dash for it and flung himself at the swing-doors. They banged open and shut and he was gone.

The jurymen sprang to their feet as one man. Randolph, always a slow thinker, thrust out his foot in a belated attempt to stop the fugitive and nearly succeeded in tripping up the coroner's officer, who was rushing to the door. Drury turned round and saw what had happened, and a faint smile

spread over his face. The local inspector had gone out some time before in anticipation of this very move, and Drury knew that at least three men were waiting in the passage. There was a short scuffle outside.

The jury returned their verdict without leaving the court. They signed the Inquisition with the meticulous care which such an important document demanded, and Mr. Fraser began to fill up a printed sheet of foolscap.

Yorkshire to wit. Whereas by an Inquisition taken the day and year hereunder mentioned before me Walter James Fraser Esquire one of the Coroners of our Sovereign Lord the King for the North Riding of the County of York on view of the body of Wayland Harrison of Sunny Lodge Southbourne lying dead at the Township of Scarborough in the North Riding of the County of York Edgar Marston Hemsworth stands charged with the wilful murder of the said Wayland Harrison. These are therefore by virtue of my office in His Majesty's name to charge and command you and every of you that some or one of you without delay do apprehend and take into custody the said Edgar Marston Hemsworth and safely convey him to His Majesty's Prison at York and safely deliver him to the Keeper of the said Prison that he may be dealt with according to Law. And these are likewise by virtue of my said office in His Majesty's name to will and require you the Keeper of the said Prison to receive

the body of the said Edgar Marston Hemsworth into your custody and him safely to keep in the said Prison until he shall be thence discharged by due course of Law. And for so doing this is your Warrant.

Mr. Fraser dated and signed the document and handed it to the inspector.

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The harness of death

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